Mr A Van Ratten

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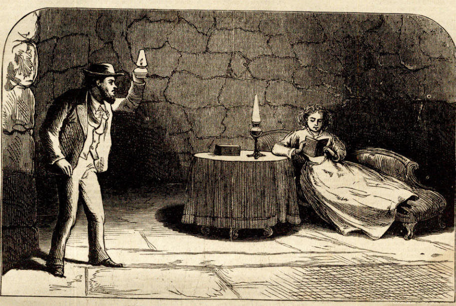


ALLIE AMES DISCOVERED IN HER PRISON BY JACK WITHERS.

ALONE IN THE WOODS OF WINTER.

BY NATHAN D. URNER.

I.

When the little brook swoons in his icy sheath,
And his water-talk fails as the snow-flakes fly,
I wander alone, with bated breath,
Through the bare brown woods and the fields near by,
And dream of how green
Was the same drear scene,
When you and I roamed it together of old,
And life and love rolled in a river of gold.

II.

The little brook then was a creature of life,
And his talk as clear as a wilding bird's,
And these woods and fields with flowers were rife,
And the whole, with your tender and sweet love-words,
Was a musical dream,
In which all did seem
A rhythmic wreathing of passionate hours,
Made up of the trees, and the fields, and the flowers.

III.

How little we guessed of the rude fate then,
Which has torn us apart, and scattered us far,
Through the turbulent world of women and men,
As life from life, or as star from star!
Perchance you have found,
In the stranger's ground,
Another love, loyal and fond as was mine,
To bend with pride at your beauty's shrine!

IV.

I only know that my own sad heart
Has aye been alone since those days with you;
And here, in this world of winter apart,
Your form still moves as it used to do;
But now seen, and then lost,
As if formed of the frost,
Or born of the wind that so wild and shrill
Flurries the snow o'er the landscape chill.

THE FIRE SPREADERS;

OR,

The Burners of Chicago.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY MAGICIAN," "RED KNIFE," "THE BROKEN HOME," "EDDY'S SEARCH," "THE CLUB-FOOT BEAR," "MARK HEBER'S LUCK," "THE PLOT AGAINST HAWLEY," ETC.

CHAPTER V.

TO WHAT JACK'S KEY LED HIM.

That Jack Withers forgot all about his recent hunger and fatigue, as he descended the cellar stairs of the house he had invaded, may be accounted morally certain.

His thoughts were now of the discoveries he was likely to make in that quarter, in virtue of the monster key of which he had so boldly and promptly taken possession.

Mid-way of the stairs he suddenly halted, by reason of a suggestion of prudence, but he almost instantly resumed his downward course, with an air of defiant contempt.

The thought which had caused him to hesitate that brief instant could have been read upon his features.

It was a thought of the sleeping ruffian he had left behind him, and of the possibility that other enemies might soon loom up before him.

The reflection too which had caused him to resume his descent so quickly was equally legible upon his countenance.

"When a man is half determined to kill himself, as I've been ever since I heard of the horrible death of Allie Ames," so ran his reflection, "he don't care a cent if there *is* a desperate ruffian snoring the roof off above, or if several similar ruffians are lurking beneath."

And with this he went steadily downward to the bottom of the stairs.

The cellar in which he now found himself was about twenty-four feet square, as he soon assured himself by the compound agencies of sight, touch, and candle-light. The walls were all smooth and pointed, and contained not the least projection, countersink, crevice, or other characteristic open to any sort of reasonable suspicion.

As regarded contents, there was nothing in the cellar save several barrels ranged along the walls, and a bin about seven feet square which contained several bushels of potatoes. This bin stood exactly in the centre of the cellar. As to the barrels, some of them contained fluids, such as vinegar, and some of them contained solids, such as pork, but there was nothing in the appearance of either the bin or the barrels that for an instant arrested the intruder's attention.

"Am on the wrong tack, certain," he muttered, pausing in his explorations. "Must go aloft."

He took a few retreating steps and then halted again, regarding the mysterious key.

"Supposing there's a secret in the case," he reflected, "why, the cellar, after all, is the place for a secret. I must look for a hollow in the wall—for some big key-hole covered with putty—for some kind of an addition or an extension to this here cellar. In short, I must look further."

He made a new survey of the place, but fruitlessly.

"The only thing that looks odd," he mused, halting once more, "is that potato bin in the middle of the cellar. Potatoes are well enough in their way, but that bin would have been more to my taste in one corner. Seems to me an honest bin enough."

Here he took hold of one of the four corner posts of the bin, and gave it a stout push from him.

To his astonishment, the whole bin yielded to this pressure, moving several inches.

"Good," said Withers to himself. "This bin is mounted on wheels or rollers—mounted in such a way that it's easy to move it to one side."

Dropping upon his hands and knees, he peered under the bin, and discovered that it was indeed mounted upon four small wooden wheels, and that it was susceptible of being secured so firmly in place that no ordinary pressure could move it. And looking still more narrowly, he could detect traces of the tracks these wheels had recently made in being rolled over the hard bottom of the cellar.

"Good," he repeated. "When a thing begins to go, the proper way is to keep it going. It is in this way that one reaches the conclusion."

He accordingly pushed the bin again, and it again retreated. Continuing to push it before him, Withers came very near tumbling into a well-like aperture which suddenly yawned beneath his feet, and which this movement of the bin had uncovered.

The well-like aperture thus disclosed was about four feet in diameter, and not far from eight feet deep. The sides were of brick, very neatly laid. A ladder stood in this circular space, the top of it just reaching to the level of the cellar bottom.

At sight of this singular orifice, the eyes of Jack Withers lighted up intelligently. He knew that he was gaining possession of a curious secret, to say the least.

Holding his candle down into the well-like space, he tried to see what was its depth. Failing in this, he began descending the ladder, and soon reached its foot, landing upon a brick pavement.

And here it was that Jack found the object he was seeking—a hole for his key.

In one side of the circular pit was a small but stout iron-bound door, studded with immense rivets and nails, and at one side of this door was a huge lock, which corresponded to the key. A single glance assured Jack of this correspondence, and he lost no time in inserting the key and turning it. Then he pushed open the formidable door, and peered into the space thus disclosed to his sight.

To his increased surprise, he found himself looking into a vaulted apartment nearly as large as the cellar he had traversed. The flooring and the roof, like the walls on every side, were of brick, neatly pointed, and were not particularly damp.

But it was not to these features of the scene before him that the gaze of Jack Withers was directed. At his first glance into the vault his eyes had encountered something of vastly greater importance.

There was not only a light in this vault, but various articles of furniture and clothing—a small table, a couple of chairs, a mattress, plenty of bedding, dishes, remnants of a breakfast—all the necessaries, in fact, of an occupant. And this occupant was not only then and there present, but seated in such proximity to the door that Jack's astonished gaze had immediately fallen upon her.

He carried his hand to his eyes, and thus shut out from his view the startling vision.

It was no wonder that he could not at first receive the evidence of his senses.

Within this secret vault, upon a little lounge, reclined a young girl—a mere child she seemed to Withers—engaged in reading a book. She was wrapped in a large shawl. The little table to which we have made reference was drawn up near her, and between her and the door, in such a position that the light standing upon it fell over her shoulder, and directly upon the page she was perusing. And the thing that made this lovely apparition so surprising and unreal to Jack Withers, was the fact that this beautiful being did not move at his presence, and that her eyes and features did not even turn toward the entrance of the vault.

For a full minute this state of things continued—the girl continuing to read, and Jack Withers continuing to crouch at the entrance of the vault, scared and spell-bound.

"Well, are you ever coming in, sir?" suddenly demanded the girl's sweet voice, with some impatience and annoyance.

Withers stared at her still more wildly.

Not yet did she look at him.

"Well—of course—yes, I'm coming," stammered Jack, at a loss what else to say.

At this response the girl started up abruptly, dropping her book, and turned a startled gaze upon the intruder.

"It's another of them," she said, in a whisper. "There are three of them."

Jack looked nervously behind him and upward, at the same time listening.

"No, there's only one of me," he assured the girl confusedly.

"Well, what are you here for?" demanded the girl sternly.

"I—I was following the key!"

"Following the key?"

"I wanted to see where it would lead me," protested Jack, holding up the key to the young lady's view, and beginning to recover his equanimity. "I said to myself that such a key as this must certainly open the way to some great treasure, but little did I think that it would lead me into the retreat of a fairy."

"How did you come by that key?"

"I took it from the fellow up stairs—that fellow who's asleep in the room next to the kitchen, and snoring like a young hurricane. And— Ha! I see it all. That chap up stairs is a sort of Bluebeard, and you are his young wife shut up in a dungeon. Isn't that so?"

In his wondering excitement he slipped through the door-way, and squatted upon the floor of the vault, looking up into the girl's face eagerly.

"No, booby—I'm not married," she replied, almost smiling at the comical aspect of her visitor. "But who are you, and why are you here? Are you in Underbee's employ? Are you another of his vile confederates?"

"I'm nobody's 'vile confederate.' I'm plain Jack Withers, at your service."

The effect of this statement upon the girl was surprising. She leaped to her feet, advanced, put her hand upon one of Jack's shoulders as he also arose, and took a good look at him, while her features grew pallid and convulsive with emotions she could not entirely master.

"Jack Withers?" she repeated. "Auntie's husband! Can it be possible? Can it be that you have come back finally, after all these long years of absence?"

"As you see, young lady; and I must say that you appear to be, for a stranger, tolerably well posted about me and my affairs."

"You are really the Jack Withers I mean—Auntie's husband?"

"Well, as to that, I never knew that Jerushy Withers was 'Auntie' to anybody—"

"Oh, you *are* the same! you *are* Auntie's husband! I know that you are. I call Mrs. Withers Auntie because she has been so good to me, and because she wanted me to call her so. She couldn't call me her own child, and she didn't want it known that there was no relationship between us, and so she wanted me to call her Auntie. And I was glad to give her that name, for she has been as good to me as any aunt could have been, or as an own mother could have been, for that matter."

"Well, this takes the wind out of my sails," muttered Withers wonderingly. "I never would have suspected Jerushy of being an 'Auntie' or a step-mother to anybody. May I ask your name, young lady?"

"Why, don't you know what it is? You do, I'm sure! Haven't you come here to rescue me from the two villains who brought me here?"

"Blessed if I came here for any such purpose! I came here—to see what that key was keeping and guarding, and that's all there is about it!"

"And you don't know who I am?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"Then I'll tell you. But it will be a great surprise for you. I'm Allie Ames!"

Had the solid earth opened under the feet of Jack Withers he could not have been more astonished. He recoiled until his retrograde movement was stopped by the wall, and then he leaned feebly against this support, hardly able to keep himself from falling.

"Oh, I see how it is," went on Allie—for the mysterious young girl was no other than our heroine. "You have just seen Auntie, and she has told you that I was burned up in the cabin, and that's why you are so surprised to see me, but I wasn't burned up in the cabin at all."

"You—you wasn't?" Jack managed to say, as he rubbed his eyes vigorously.

"No, I wasn't."

"Are you sure? But of course you are, seeing that you are here before my eyes this very minute."

"When did you return, Mr. Withers?"

"This very morning."

"And how have you been all these years?"

"Oh, tolerable, tolerable. And so you are Allie Ames?"

He held up his light, and gazed with as much admiration as surprise upon her fair, sweet features.

"And you are Mr. Withers?" breathed Allie, as she raised her own light and bent a searching gaze upon the features before her. "How glad I am to see you! How much I have to ask you!"

"And how much I have to tell you! I was never so pleased in my life before," said Jack, as his whole face glowed and beamed excitedly. "The old woman told me a long story about her sending you back after some money she had in the pantry, and as you did not come back to her, she could do no less, naturally, than conclude that you had been caught by the flames. How did it happen that you didn't go back to her?"

"Why, I was seized by a desperate villain—"

"The fellow up stairs," put in Withers.

"Well, yes, this one or the other. Just as I was taking the money from the pantry he pounced upon me, pressed his hand over my mouth, and carried me away into the woods, taking his leave of the cabin by the back door, so that Auntie couldn't see what had become of me."

"I see. Who and what is this man?"

"His name is Wall Underbee. He has asked me several times to marry him, and I have as often refused, until he has become desperate."

"I see," commented Withers again. "An enterprising young man is this Mr. Underbee evidently. He was sharp to avail himself of a fire to make the old woman think you dead—"

"He kindled the fire himself," interrupted Allie. "I've thought it all out since I have been shut up here. He set fire to the cabin himself. He had another ruffian with him, and they had a horse and wagon in waiting. They even had ropes ready with which to tie me."

"I see," muttered Jack once more. "And so this Mr. Underbee brought you to this singular prison?"

"Yes, sir. He brought me here, and says I shall never leave this place until I promise to become his wife. He owns this house, having lately bought it; at least he says so, but I can't believe him, for the reason that no one ever knew him to have any money. The place once belonged to a famous counterfeiter, and it was here that this counterfeiter used to have his printing-office."

"All this is strange enough. These ruffians have treated you well—from their stand-point, I mean?"

"I suppose so. But I am afraid of them as I can be, and you'll take me away from here immediately, Mr. Withers, won't you?"

"Of course—immediately."

"And you will take me to Paul—to Auntie?" murmured the girl, all eagerness and excitement. "You'll take me home instantly—"

"Of course I will—"

"Let's hurry. Paul and Auntie must be worried to death about me. And Underbee and Shott may stop us at any moment—may kill you, and shut me up again!"

"Come on, then! Come!"

Turning quickly, Jack was about to lead the way from the vault, when heavy footsteps were suddenly heard directly over his head. He turned nearly as pale as did Allie at that sound.

"Too late!" he breathed. "That ruffian has waked up. The key must have been missed. We shall soon have one or both of the villains down here."

"And if you are caught, you will be killed, and I shall never, never escape!" whispered Allie. "Your better way is to wait—to get away unseen, if you can—to go and see Paul—"

"No, I won't see Paul. If I see him, he will make a row and a scandal. He will come here and fight Underbee and Shott. And these ruffians may kill you rather than let Paul release you. No, no—listen to me, child. I have been sent here from Chicago to look for you—to find you—to take you to Chicago. But as the case stands, my first duty is to report to my employer."

"Go, then. Don't lose a moment. This is the best course we can take—the only one, in fact."

"Good-bye, then. I may not get another chance to see you in three or four days, but don't be alarmed—I'll come to your rescue as soon as I can. Rest assured that I am your friend, and that you are as precious to me as the apple of my eye. It breaks my heart to leave you here, but I'm only a little old man, and if I *should* fall in a fight with these men, your friends would never, never know that you are still living."

And with this he pressed her hand, as she withdrew into the vault—closed and locked the door—and then ascended the ladder to the cellar, taking the key of the mysterious room with him.

To replace the bin of potatoes over the well-like aperture in the same condition—accounted for by the presence of a man in the house—in which he had found it, was the work of a moment, but it was not accomplished an instant too soon. Those alarming footsteps were again heard, and rose loudly.

"Guess he's coming!" thought Withers.

He was right. He had barely time to blow out his light and take refuge under the cellar stairs, when a man began descending them, candle in hand.

This man was Tripler Shott.

"Curious where that candle is," Tripler was growling. "I'm sure I left one on the chimney-piece. Wall must have taken it. Thought I never should find another. Curious too where that key is. Thought it was beside me when I went to sleep. Possibly it may have been left in the lock. I'll see."

Moving the bin as Jack had done, he descended the ladder leading to the vault.

Withers had noticed the position of the staircase, and he lost no time in slipping up to the kitchen unseen and unheard, all sounds of his movements being covered by those of Shott. To put his candle on a table, as to thrust the key into the room where he had found it, was the work of a moment. The kitchen door was now ajar, Shott having just left it so, and in another moment Jack had slipped from the house.

And now he drew a long breath of relief.

"Good," he thought. "That ruffian will find his key, and nothing will be known of my visit. And now for Chicago!"

CHAPTER VI.

A GENTLEMAN FROM FLORIDA.

It was night in Chicago—night of Thursday, the fourteenth day of September, 1871.

In the drawing-rooms of a palatial residence upon Wabash Avenue, a man of fifty or fifty-five years of age was reclining at his ease upon a silken sofa, with an air of complacent self-importance. He was heavy of build, with a floridity of complexion that amounted to redness. He was not particularly coarse, but his physique attested that he was strongly animal in his tastes, and that he cultivated his mind only so far as he was compelled to in making it minister to the greeds of his body. His sandy hair was beginning to take a grayish tinge, and perhaps his eyesight had undergone some change, for he wore a pair of gold-mounted eye-glasses, which he used officiously in his intercourse with his fellows. He was in his dressing-gown and slippers, and was evidently making himself comfortable, having papers and books around him, and some wine and a collation upon a small table near him.

This man was Harlon Edgerly, a well-known dealer in stocks, merchant, broker, and general speculator. He was sometimes a "bull," and at other times a "bear," but was reputed to make money in every business to which he turned his attention, and was generally conceded to have accumulated a handsome fortune.

All around Mr. Edgerly was the glare of lights, the glow and warmth of fires, the reflections of immense mirrors, the spectacle of elegant furniture and rich laces—all the ostentatious luxury, in fact, by which the mansions of the rich are so often distinguished. So heavy and soft was the gorgeous moquette carpet under his feet that his occasional movements were scarcely audible.

"What is it, Moxon?" he asked, as a servant suddenly entered his presence and halted near the hall door with a profound inclination.

"A letter, sir."

Mr. Edgerly took the letter from the silver salver upon which it had been brought, and hastily tore it open.

At his first glance at the envelope the redness of Mr. Edgerly's face deepened a little, and at the first line he read a shadow of annoyance crossed his brow.

"How came this thing here?" he asked.

"A boy just brought it to the door, sir, and went away immediately."

"Very well. It's another of those begging epistles with which every gentleman of wealth is continually bothered. I didn't know but some old humbug was in the hall awaiting an answer, as late as it is."

Moxon assented to the observations of his employer by another profound inclination, and then withdrew.

"The infernal nuisance!" breathed Edgerly savagely, as he crushed in his hand the note he had just received. "I'll find means to get rid of that woman before she is much older, I'm certain!"

The sound of wheels resounded upon Edgerly's hearing, and a carriage drew up at the door.

A few moments later three persons mounted the steps and entered the spacious hall—Mrs. Edgerly, her son, and her daughter.

The two latter passed on up stairs without looking into the drawing-rooms, but a gesture from Edgerly arrested the steps of his wife, and she came into his immediate presence.

She was a tall, stout woman, with immense development of bust, with heavy limbs, thick, short neck, and a large red face, which even the most devoted application of pearl-white and kindred cosmetics could not blanch to an interesting pallor. She was essentially vulgar—one of those coarse, ill-bred women who, under a veneer of polished manners, manage to creep into the outskirts of good society, and who flatter themselves that they are fashionable. She was dressed regally in a light-colored silk, and wore an opera cloak and a magnificent set of diamonds.

"What! taking a late supper, love?" she exclaimed, in a loud and affected voice, as she struck an attitude of surprise, with one of her large but richly jewelled hands upon the back of a chair.

"Sit down, dear," returned Edgerly, in a voice that sounded meek and subdued by contrast with his wife's. "I wish to say a few words to you."

He closed both of the doors leading into the hall, then came back to his wife, who had dropped into a chair.

"I've just received another letter from that wretched Mrs. Smallett," he announced. "She just sent it here by a boy. She says she wants five hundred dollars to-night—to-night, as late as it is—and that she will be waiting at the usual place at midnight to receive the money."

"Well, Harlon?"

"Well, I suppose I shall have to take it to her, as the least of two evils, but I must say that I am getting heartily sick of the whole nuisance. It's not so much the money she costs me, but the annoyance she gives me, that makes me pray for the day of her death. I am satisfied that she is becoming a drunkard, and that she makes free among her associates with my good name—"

"But all that tattle of the back slums will never do you the least harm, Harlon," interrupted Mrs. Edgerly. "Let us hope that the creature will soon drink herself to death, and that her secrets will die with her. In the mean time—if you want any advice—I would advise you to take her the money. I do not want any scandal at any time, and least of all just at present. Both Flora and Montague are in a fair way to make good matches, and I want to get them off our hands before we grapple seriously with any difficulties growing out of that Ames business—if any such are likely to come. By the way, have you heard anything about that girl lately?"

"No—nothing since I was up that way last winter. She is doubtless still living with old Mrs. Withers, and must be about old enough to receive the attentions of some rustic lover. She'll probably marry some lumberman or farm laborer in the course of a year or two, and settle down in that neighborhood. In any case, there is not the least chance of her ever crossing our path, or of her ever receiving the least hint as to her origin. It was a serious weakness for Withers to let the old woman worm out of him that the girl's real name was Allie Ames, but, after all, there are ten thousand families of the name in the country, and not the least danger exists that the girl will ever trouble us."

"Then I do not see that we have any reason to complain of our affairs," said Mrs. Edgerly thoughtfully. "It is annoying, of course, to have Mrs. Smallett extorting money from us; and still more annoying to reflect that she has a knowledge of a portion of our secrets; but she can't last forever. If you want any consolation, love, for these little miseries, look around you. Have not our plans all been successful? Have you not achieved distinction? Are not my parties the talk of society; my diamonds unapproachable; my wardrobe the envy of half the ladies in the city? Are not the children in a fair way to become comfortably settled for life? And have not all these successes grown out of that simple but weighty resolve of ours of many years ago, to get rid of both John Ames and his daughter, and to appropriate to ourselves John Ames' fortune?"

"And it is for all these reasons that I have never regretted our action in all those matters, Rublie," declared Edgerly, in a guarded whisper, but with the firmness of a soul completely closed to remorse. "If at any time I have certain uneasy recollections of those events, I have only to look around me, as you suggest, to feel that my action toward John Ames and his daughter, however blamable or disagreeable, was one that I would have been a fool not to take. In the actual constitution of things money is the first essential of existence, but it is one that I should never have secured but for the start that Ames' fortune gave me. Neither of us had anything to speak of when we were married save a fair reputation, and the expenses of a family kept us under the harrow thereafter. But there is no use of dwelling upon these matters."

"Not the least," returned Mrs. Edgerly, settling her diamond bracelets upon her wrists. "All we have done has been necessary. But for our courage of years ago, we should to-day be nobodies, and our children would be beggars. For my part, there is nothing I wouldn't endure rather than go back to the abysses of poverty and obscure misery in which the first years of our wedded life were consumed—I should say wasted."

It will be seen that the couple were well worthy of each other.

Self was their one gospel.

To revel in ostentatious wealth was the one object of their existence.

The only affection they had for any human being was the affection they had for their son and daughter, and their chief care for these was to assure them "good matches," and enough of this world's goods to maintain them in their present luxurious and fashionable and brilliant surroundings.

"We agree, of course, upon all these matters," said Edgerly, arising, "and that is why we have made a success of all our undertakings. We have acted as one mind—or rather with the advantage of putting two sharp and resolute wills together. And after all, as you say, we have little to complain of. This wretched Mrs. Smallett is of very little account in comparison with all the real essentials of life around us. She is rather an annoyance than a danger."

"And as to all the rest of our pensioners," said Mrs. Edgerly lightly, "they are all duly cared for. The daughter is growing up in ignorance and obscurity—"

"She is pretty, however, Rublie—I must say that she is pretty," interrupted Edgerly, with the air of looking back into his memory. "And I have repeatedly mentioned to you, you remember, that old Mrs. Withers wasted several hundred dollars—all her hard-earned savings—in giving the girl an opportunity for education, of which she must have taken a wonderful advantage."

"Well, well—I merely intended to say that the girl is buried alive up there in the woods of Wisconsin, and that she will never trouble us. As to Withers, he has kept away from his old wife, at your express commands, and is living under your thumb, at very trifling expense to us. And as to the girl's father, he is safe in Florida, in the care of Bushwick. The whole wall of safety and self-protection is thus perfect around us, and all we have to do is to go on as we have been going—take every comfort, guard every interest, and scheme for ourselves and our children."

"Yes, that is the programme," approved Edgerly, "and as an obscure step in this round of duties, I will now meet Mrs. Smallett again, I think, and give her the money she demands."

"Yes, that is our best course with her—at least for the present. One of these days she may put herself into your power, or you may get rid of her at the hands of Jack Withers, or some such instrument; but for the present, I repeat, manage her."

Bowing assent to this advice, Edgerly proceeded to equip himself for the street, putting on a pair of stout boots, and exchanging his dressing-gown for a business coat, with an outer coat over it.

"You will find me here when you come back," said Mrs. Edgerly, when her husband was ready for departure, "for I shall not be free from anxieties at having you out at such an hour, and upon such an errand."

"Very well, dear," returned the husband, as he buttoned up his outer coat and drew a soft hat over his eyes; and with this he took his departure.

It was at least an hour past midnight when Edgerly returned to his house, with swift and stealthy steps, and muffled so closely with the collar of his coat and with his slouched hat that no one could have caught the least glimpse of his features. He was about to give himself admittance with a night key, when the door was opened from within, and he found himself face to face with his wife.

"What! so anxious as that?" was his first remark, in a light and careless voice.

Mrs. Edgerly essayed some response, but her voice died away in an incoherent murmur. She moved, however, although with a sort of paralytic motion, closing the door, and leading the way into the drawing-room. Her hand, as she accidentally touched her husband, in assisting him off with his outer coat, was as cold as death, and her eyes nearly as glassy as those of a corpse.

"Why, what ails you, Rublie?" demanded Edgerly, looking keenly at her. "How your manner is changed since I went out upon this little expedition. You look as if you had seen a ghost! Can it be that this affair of Mrs. Smallett has so completely upset you?"

Mrs. Edgerly made another effort to speak, and this time succeeded in controlling her voice.

"It's not Mrs. Smallett," she declared, in a husky whisper. "But—what of her? Did you see her?"

"I did, and that matter is all right—at least for the present—"

"Cautious! Don't speak so loud!"

"*Cautious!*" repeated Edgerly, staring at his wife in amazement. "And why this excess of caution in our own house?"

Edgerly had unconsciously raised his voice, and his wife now took him by the arm, as she looked shudderingly toward the stairs.

"Hush! not so loud!" she whispered. "You do not know what has happened here during your absence."

"Why, what *has* happened here?"

"Listen!" returned Mrs. Edgerly, struggling with her emotions. "Not long after you went away I seated myself in the drawing-room before the fire, for my ride home from the theatre had chilled me. The children had gone to bed, as had all the servants. And while I sat there, thinking about all this business of Mrs. Smallett, what should I hear but a loud sharp knock at the front door."

"A ring, you mean."

"No—a knock."

"Well, a knock at the door is no killing matter, if it *was* a little late. Many of one's country cousins knock for admittance when they come to the city."

"But there was something about that knock, Harlon, that struck me all of a heap the minute I heard it. I felt all over on the spot that trouble was coming. And while I sat as if glued to the chair the knock was repeated."

"Well, you didn't answer it, of course."

"Not until it was repeated for the fourth or fifth time—not until I was afraid it would bring down the children and servants—not, in fact, until I had reflected that Montague could be summoned in a moment if his presence should be necessary."

"I see. And so you finally opened the door?"

"Yes, I finally opened the door, when in walked—I will not undertake to say who. Here is the card he gave me."

She produced a slip of crumpled pasteboard from her pocket, and thrust it, with a trembling hand, under the eyes of her husband, who instantly read the four words written thereon:

"A gentleman from Florida."

A victim does not fall under the stroke of lightning quicker than Harlon Edgerly sank back into a chair, as his soul took in the purport of that brief announcement.

"From Florida?" he gasped.

Then his usually red face became strangely white, and he shook as if in convulsions.

"From Florida?" he repeated, after returning for a full minute the horrified gaze of his wife. "Why, Rublie, he wasn't the father of that girl up in the woods near Berwick? He wasn't John Ames?"

"I couldn't make out *who* he was, he was so disguised, and he didn't tell me. I asked him two or three times for his name, but he said it 'didn't matter,' that he was an 'old friend,' that he'd give his name to you, and so on."

"He was disguised, you say? Where is he now?"

"In the front chamber."

"In this house, Rublie?"

The husband looked electrified.

"I couldn't get rid of him. It was in vain that I mentioned the lateness of the hour: he merely assented. All in vain that I told him of your absence, and declared that you might be absent until morning: he said he could wait. All in vain that I insisted upon his departure; he said he would take the responsibility of staying, if I would give him a room. And I was so scared, and he was so strange, and spoke so ominously of business, that I didn't dare to call Montague, and so I assented to his remaining."

"And this man is now here?" murmured Edgerly, as he carried his hand involuntarily to a concealed weapon.

"In the front chamber—as I told you."

"And you have no idea who he is?"

"Yes, I have an idea."

"Well, who do you think he is?"

"I think he's the father of that girl up there in the woods with Mrs. Withers. I think he's John Ames."

It would be difficult to describe the effect of these few words upon Edgerly.

He became even whiter in the hearing than had his wife in the telling. The return of one from the grave could hardly have been more horrifying than was that declaration—the presence of the said John Ames then and there implied so much.

"John Ames!" repeated Edgerly huskily, as the scared blood returned in such torrents to his face as to render it livid. "You really think he's John Ames?"

Mrs. Edgerly nodded dumbly.

"You can't say for a certainty whether he is or is not?"

"No; but who else can he be? Who else would announce himself in such a way as that?"

She picked up the card which had fallen from her husband's nerveless grasp, and both again devoured the four words upon it with glances full of a wondering horror.

"You are right, Rublie," said Edgerly slowly. "Who else could announce himself as 'a gentleman from Florida?' Who else would dare come here at such an unseasonable hour? Were he Bushwick, he would have come here by daylight, and he would have announced his coming beforehand. And if this man is not either Ames or Bushwick—and the latter theory is not possible—how does he know anything about that Florida business? In size does he resemble Ames?"

Mrs. Edgerly again nodded, while she fanned herself violently.

"Did you get a view of his face?"

"No. He kept it bent forward, or turned from me, or in the shadow. His beard, his hair, his very eyebrows, were evidently false, they were so large, so bushy, so unlike what we usually see."

"And how is he dressed?"

"In a foreign looking suit, with a large cloak. He's fairly muffled with clothing and wrappings. And as he stood all the time in a bowing posture, with a pretence of being polite, I couldn't decide exactly as to his height, or get anything like a view of his features. Another thing, I was frightened nearly to death. These words, 'a gentleman from Florida,' completely upset me, as you may suppose, and I'm not sure that I really dared to look straight at him."

"Did he see that you were afraid?"

"See! How could he help seeing? Wouldn't any one see at a glance, to look at us at this moment, that we are scared nearly out of our wits?"

"Scared? Why, no—"

"But they would though. Just look in this glass before you."

Edgerly cast his eyes in the direction indicated, and recoiled as if he had seen a phantom.

"We *do* look a little out of sorts," he concluded, with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "Was the man armed?"

"Not to my knowledge—that is, I didn't see anything of any weapons?"

"Of course not. But he has arms concealed on his person, you may be certain—as I have. Did he seem to arrive all alone?"

"Yes, he did. I took a look from the door, but saw no one hanging around the premises—no friend or servant."

"What excuse did he give for coming here at such a late hour?"

"Not any direct excuse, if I remember rightly. He did say that he had seen a light burning in the parlor, and so concluded that we were still up—"

"But the light is no excuse for entering the house at such at hour."

"No, and he didn't make an excuse of it. He merely said that he happened to be in the neighborhood, as late as it was, and that he would avail himself of the circumstance to pay you a visit he had long been intending to make—"

"But why did not you tell him that I was another Edgerly? that I had moved away? that I had died years ago?"

"I began in that way, with some vague purpose of the sort, but he shut me up in a minute. He said that he had business with Mr. Harlon Edgerly, and with no other Edgerly whatever, and that he was already aware, not only of your continued existence and health, but also of your residence at this house—he having made inquiries in the matter—"

"Ah, he has been making inquiries then?" interrupted Edgerly, his face again paling.

"Yes, he has. From what he said, I should say he has been in the neighborhood for some hours, at the least."

"You insisted upon my absence?"

"Certainly, and I told him to call at a suitable hour of the morning, but he paid no attention to anything I said contrary to his own views and intentions. He summed up the whole state of the case by saying that you'd soon be home; that I would, of course, sit up until your return, and that there couldn't be the least harm in his waiting up with me."

"Cleverly put," muttered Edgerly, as his wife heaved a deep sigh.

"So cleverly, indeed, that all I said after that was wasted. But as to his waiting with me for your return, you can imagine how little I wanted his company. I was on live coals every minute—I could not even sit down in a chair. And so I told him I would show him the way to a room, and lost no time in doing so. It would have been more than awkward for me to have allowed him to remain here until your return."

"It would indeed! On no account would I have stumbled into the room in utter ignorance of his presence. That was making the best of a bad situation, Rublie, your showing him to a room for the night. And so—here he is, in the chamber over ours?"

"Yes, here he is, and you now know as well as I do whether he is John Ames or not."

A brief silence fell between the couple, and Edgerly's stern face then assumed an expression of ferocity, as he whispered:

"I'm almost certain he's Ames! He can't be Bushwick, for a number of good reasons; and still less can he be a stranger of whom we have never seen anything until this moment."

"He's undoubtedly Ames."

"Well, if he *is* Ames," said Edgerly, sinking his voice still lower, while he glared around him, "we have not reached the end of our labors. In fact, they are only beginning! For if this man is John Ames, hasn't he come here for vengeance? Isn't he here to call us to a terrible account?"

Once more Mrs. Edgerly nodded dumbly.

"Isn't he here," resumed Edgerly, in a lower but more excited voice—"isn't he here to put the final brand of guilt and infamy upon us? Isn't he here to probe all our plots to the core? Isn't he here to avenge both his own wrongs and those of his daughter? Shall we not be arrested and imprisoned? Will not our guilt be published to the world? Shall we not become a by-word and a scorn to our neighbors?"

"Not unless we are fools," was the quick, sharp response of Mrs. Edgerly, as her eyes became injected with blood. "Not unless we are idiots. What! after we have lived the lives we *have* lived during all these fourteen years, shall we now shrink from a final wickedness—from a crowning crime which will give absolution to all the rest? Never, Harlon Edgerly—never!"

"But what would you do?" asked the husband, in a low, hissing voice.

"I would see if the man is really John Ames," was the answer, in a corresponding whisper, "and if he is I would kill him! He should never leave the house alive! I would kill him!"

As she finished the horrible declaration, one of the doors leading from the hall opened softly, and the strange unbidden guest—the very man of whom she had spoken—appeared to the startled gaze of the husband and wife!

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE CHRISTMAS WREATH.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

Three little faces were pressed close to the window, watching with eager interest the great brown stone house across the way.

There were little children at the windows of that house too; bright, beautiful, rosy, merry little ones they were, so different to those in the humble frame opposite, who, pinched and pale and sad, had a wistful look in their sweet eyes as they saw the happiness of those they were watching.

"Oh! an't it jolly for them? And an't it nice to be rich, and have lots of friends?" exclaimed little Georgie, who for the time forgot his own dreariness in seeing the joy of his neighbors.

"Oh, yes, indeed. That big box is full as ever it can be with goodies and dolls, an't it, Georgie?" said little Evie, as the expressman, with the assistance of a servant, carried in a large box.

"Christmas *is* grand over the way. I know that boy will have a gun, and a sword, and a drum. Oh, mamma, mamma, will Christmas ever come so to us?" Georgie asked, with a longing look in his great blue eyes.

The mother's lips quivered, tears filled her eyes, and for a moment she could not answer. Georgie saw his words had made his darling mother sad, and springing into her lap, he clasped his arms about her neck, and pressing kisses upon her pale face, said:

"We don't mind if we are not rich, mamma! Do we, girls? We can wait for a good time until I get to be a big man. Then, mamma, we will have it. Don't cry; please don't."

The mother forced back her tears, saying:

"My little man, as long as my darlings are well and with me, I am content. But, oh, I do wish some one would send my little ones something to make their Christmas merry."

"Mamma, God won't forget us. Oh, I'm sure He won't. Something good will come to us, I think. If I could only get well—I mean if I could run about with the other children—that would be the best thing I could have for my Christmas," said May—lovely, patient little May. She was an angelic child. Hopelessly crippled since infancy, never playing with other children, she was, when only eight years old, so full of thoughts beautiful, good and wise, that her mother felt she was not long for earth. And though from her suffering and loveliness she was dearer than the others to the mother's heart, she often felt as if she must loosen her clasping arms from about her darling, and let her flee away where she could wander about with the little ones, in the Home where all the suffering children grow well and happy.

Mary Grayson stole quietly out, while the little ones were prattling. Dropping on her knees beside her bed, she wept bitterly.

Oh, how hard it was to have those little ones really suffering for the comforts she could never give them! May, most of all, needed little delicacies. Oh, would better days never come to them?

Three years before, her husband, having saved sufficient to support his little family for two years, had left them, going with a party to Australia, promising to be home with a little fortune in two years. The time rolled slowly by, but he came not, nor one word since of him. The little money left was all gone, and Mary and her little ones were living on the small amount procured by her needle.

"It snows! it snows! Now, mamma, fix me up as warm as you can. I'm going to run across the way to the big house, and ask them to let me clear off their pavement when it has done snowing. I'll be in time. Oh, if I could only get ten pavements to clear off, I'd have lots of money; more than enough for a turkey!" exclaimed Georgie, his eyes dancing with great expectation.

"Ten pavements to clear off with these poor little hands! Why, little love, that will be work enough for a great strong man," the mother said.

As she wrapped the warm scarf about his neck, and buttoned the well-patched coat over the brave little heart, she thanked God for the great blessing he was.

"My love, have you noticed those little faces at the window across the street?" asked Philip Austin, the owner of the brown stone house, and pretty bright children in it.

"Not particularly. Why?" returned Mrs. Austin.

"Well, to me they have a very touching expression. Now look! See how they watch this house!"

"Papa, the boy that is most all the time with them has just gone down from our door," said Willie Austin.

"Ring the bell, and inquire what he wanted, my dear," said Mr. Austin.

Another moment, and a servant entered. Mrs. Austin made the desired inquiry.

The man, smiling, answered:

"He wanted to engage clearing off the pavement, when the snow has stopped falling."

"Poor little fellow! And what did you say to him, James?" asked Mr. Austin.

"I laughed at him, and told him he had better go down on the wharf and engage in helping to unload vessels, sir," replied the man.

"You ought not to have spoken to him so, James. Poor child! I wish you had let me know of his being here."

"Yes, papa, you would not have let him go away with such a sad face, I know," said Willie.

"James, keep a look-out for him. Tell him to come and help you, and pay him well. He is a manly little fellow, and I think would rather work than receive money without."

"Yes, sir," James answered.

Mr. Austin, turning to his wife, said:

"I wish, my dear, either to-day or to-morrow, so it may reach them by Christmas-day, you would make up a basket or box of such things as will please, and comfort too, those little ones, and send it over with the kind wishes of ours."

"Oh, yes, yes, *do*, mamma. How nice it will be!" the children exclaimed.

Just then a carriage stopped before the house, from which a gentleman sprang out, and ran quickly up the steps. Willie sang out:

"Uncle Charley! Hurra! Uncle Charley has come!"

Another moment, and a handsome, middle-aged man entered the room, catching first Mrs. Austin, and then the little ones, in a loving embrace.

In the joy of Uncle Charley's coming, the little ones across the street were quite forgotten for that day; and the next, Mrs. Austin was so busy with preparations to make Christmas-day one of more than usual rejoicing, in honor of Uncle Charley's return, that she had no time to think of the poor little ones. Once Willie exclaimed:

"Oh, mamma, you have not sent over the presents to those little children."

Mrs. Austin was annoyed at the reminder, but said:

"Dear me! I had quite forgotten. There are so many really necessary calls on my time and memory, I can hardly be expected to remember such things. But to-morrow will do just as well. I'll go out this evening and purchase some little presents for them."

Christmas morn dawned brightly. What a merry set of little ones the Austins were! Scarcely any breakfast was eaten. They could not spare the time from the beautiful and almost countless presents—presents from papa, mamma, Uncle Charley, aunts, cousins, and friends innumerable.

The youngest of them, Lilly, a little three-year-old fairy, stood on a chair arranging her doll at the window for passers to admire. Presently she sang out in a pretty, lisping voice:

"Oh, Willie, come see! Is that a Christmas box?"

Willie bounded to the window. A moment, and he cried out:

"Oh, no, no! It is a little coffin."

All hastened to the window then, with awed and solemn faces. After a few moments Mr. Austin said:

"My dear, did you send over some things to those little ones?"

"Oh, no; I intended to this morning. I thought it would be just as well. I have had so much to think of," answered Mrs. Austin, in a tone of regret.

"*Too late* now to comfort *one* of them," Mr. Austin said sorrowfully.

Yes, too late to comfort little May.

For three or four days previous to Christmas she had failed much, grown visibly weaker. When the dawn of that blessed day came she cried out:

"Mamma, I'm *so* glad! I'll soon be well! See—I can stand up!"

For a second she stood up on her feet—her hands clasped—an expression of unearthly joy on her beautiful, pale face.

The mother sprang forward, clasped her arm around and drew back to her bosom only May's little lifeless body.

Scarcely had she laid tenderly down the loved form when Georgie's Christmas greeting reached her ear:

"May, May, where are you? See! here is your Christmas wreath!"

He ran joyously in. The smiles fled—a frightened look from the pale, cold face to his mother, so tearful and sad, and Georgie cried:

"What is the matter, mamma? Won't May wake up?"

In vain she tried to comfort him, and explain how happy May was, away with the angel children. But Georgie could only understand that May was gone from them; and burying his little face in the pillow on which her dear head rested, he wept himself to sleep.

A shadow had stolen over the merry folks of Austin house. The children watched with anxious faces the closed window where their little neighbors used to sit, and wondered for which the little coffin was.

Mrs. Austin's pleasure was marred, for a great regret was in her heart. Constantly came the thought:

"If I only had remembered those poor little ones!"

"It is never too late to do right and good. Send to the children left, and inquire if we may do anything to help them in their trouble. Do you know their names, my dear?" said Mr. Austin.

"Grayson, I believe. I think she is a widow—"

"Grayson!" exclaimed Uncle Charley. "Tell me more of them."

"The little fellow told me his papa had gone to Australia, and—"

Ere Willie had finished his story Uncle Charley was crossing the street, to the great astonishment of his sister and brother-in-law.

Two hours passed before he returned. Then he told them that the father of these little ones was his dearest friend; that his return home was principally to find George Grayson's widow and children, and bear to them the little fortune he had made.

"And I must pay to those he loved the debt of gratitude I owed to him," said Uncle Charley. "He nursed me through the fever, and when all others pronounced me dead, he still worked on, and with God's blessing, saved me."

"And his loved ones so near me, and so needy! Oh, if I had only known it!" said Mrs. Austin.

And when her brother told more of those little ones, particularly of the *only* Christmas gift which came to little May—the Christmas wreath that Georgie had given her—and which was then lying on her little coffin, Mrs. Austin shed tears of regret for her neglect.

"Oh, I wish I had sent them something. I might have contributed to make a little more comfortable the last days of that little one's life. But I forgot," she said.

And when constantly came the thought of little May's only gift, the beautiful wreaths and garlands which decorated her rooms seemed to lose their bright, cheerful look. Everything was darkened by the heavy cloud which shadowed her heart that Christmas-day.

That *our* happiness be not clouded thus, nor the beautiful Christmas wreaths lose to us their cheering aspect, we will remember *some* little ones within our reach, if not across the street, whose friends are so few, and whose wants are so many.

WIT AND HUMOR.

An elderly gentleman called at a boarding-house in San Francisco, and asked of the servant who opened the door, "Have you a room to let?" "Yes," she replied; "but—" "But what?" asked the gentleman. "You are over sixty, aren't you?" asked the girl. "Yes," he answered, "I am sixty-five." "I thought so," said the girl; "you can't have the room, as my missis don't want any funerals from her house."

A newspaper in Georgetown, Texas, apologizes to its readers for not telling them about the Boston fire, as follows: "We intended to publish the dispatches regarding the fire in Boston, and laid aside the paper containing them, for the purpose of clipping them out; but before we had time to do so, Col. Coffee borrowed it, and failed to return it."

The writer of a touching obituary on a lady friend, who quoted the line, "Life is a shadow, how it flies!" was disgusted to find it printed, "Life is a shad, oh, how it flies!" He corrected the error, and had the article republished, when to his intense chagrin it came out, "Life is a shad-roe, how it flies!" He concluded to let 'er fly.

An advertisement of the services of a church in this city recently stated that "on Sunday next the service will commence at half-past three and continue until further notice." No further notice having yet been given, it is supposed that the said afternoon service is still in progress.

"Charley, what makes your cheeks so red?" asked a lover of his sweetheart's little brother. "'Cause I put some of sister's paint on 'em," said Charley. The situation was embarrassing, especially for Charley after the lover took his leave.

A lady who has a pretty hand is anxious to know if a person is more likely to burn her fingers because they are taper ones. We don't know, but it is probable that she should be careful how they come in contact with sparks!

It is declared by an Indiana editor, who "can't stand it any longer," that the only difference between the entrance to a barn and a lounger around newspaper offices is, that the first is a barn door and the latter a darn' bore.

"Can you name the four seasons?" asked a school visitor of a class that was on exhibition. "Yes, sir," said a bright looking little boy. "What are they, my little man?" "Salt, pepper, vinegar and mustard," was the reply.

Fast Time.—In a recent divorce case in Kansas, the case was tried, the divorce granted, and the lady re-married in twelve minutes, "the lady being timed," as the reporter says, "by Judge Bliss's racing watch."

A young fellow offered to bet the principal of a young ladies' seminary, who was boasting of the proficiency of his pupils, that he hadn't a girl in his school who would "decline" a husband.

We have the record of the last words of many of the great men of the olden time. We have none, however, of Socrates, for Xantippe would never allow him to have the last word.

A Western editor's statement, "We are living at this moment under absolute despotism," is explained by his contemporaries by the fact that he has lately been married.

The longest building in this country is undoubtedly that which reaches from Alaska to Mexico—the water-shed of the Rocky Mountains.

Of course it is unnecessary to mention so soon after the war, that all the cavalry regiments were accompanied by veteranary surgeons.

Oxen have been set to towing canal-boats. If anything *can* hurry up steam navigation on our canals, the slow-paced oxen will do it.

Michigan has a Rum river and a Bad river. They are different rivers, but as their names indicate, both the same sort of streams.

John Smith says nobody ever paid him much attention until he broke out of jail, and then he was much sought after.

Louis Blanc has been forbidden to lecture in Italy, and the police are under orders to Mount Blanc if he undertakes.

When Othello admitted that he "did take away this old man's daughter," he pleaded guilty to grand lasseny.

An Arkansas girl having named her kitten Dolly Varden, her little brother named his Thomas Varden.

Beware of the patent medicine men; they are vial impostors!

August is like pride—it goes before a fall.

CURRENT ITEMS.

The flagstaff near the City Hotel in Toulumne, Cal., was recently discovered to be leaning from its base; it was conjectured that it was on the point of falling, and the city trustees set about having it taken down. To this end they employed a man named Nicholo Blacovich to unship the topmast. He ascended by a rope to a distance of ninety feet—the length of the mainmast—when the pole fell with a tremendous crash, tearing away a corner of the hotel porch and shade trees in front. Nicholo was killed instantly. The flagstaff was rotten at the base, and eaten away by grubs.

A lynx attacked two men in a boat half a mile from shore, in Portage lake, Mich., recently, and bit the hands of one of the men severely. A terrible scuffle ensued between the men and the animal, which was ejected from the boat no less than three times, and bounded back into the craft after he had been pounded over the head with an oar. He was finally killed and taken on board.

Some squatters on the Osage lands in Kansas recently visited the town of Parsons, and attempted to lynch the chief of the land department of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railway. The demonstration grew out of exasperation produced by the recent decision of the Secretary of the Interior, that the lands on which they live belong to the railway.

Several weeks ago a man named Kelsey was tarred and feathered by a party of "roughs" in Huntington, L. I., and has never been heard from since. It is supposed that he wandered into the woods and died, and a number of the ruffians are to be arrested and held in custody till his fate can be ascertained.

A prestidigitateur in Texas was giving an exhibition, and when he came to the old trick of catching a ball shot from a pistol, the person who was selected to fire the pistol substituted one of his own and shot the showman dead. The shooter was arrested the next day on a charge of murder.

A burglar in California was discovered by the owner of the house, who recognized him, and so, to escape pursuit and capture, killed the house-owner, his wife and three children, and then set fire to the house. His booty was fourteen hundred dollars, and he was traced and captured in five days.

A Pittsburgh boy introduced a novelty in the way of stealing rides, by jumping on the cow-catcher of locomotives, but his companions were discouraged from following his lead by the fact that on his third attempt he fell beneath the wheels of the locomotive and was crushed to death.

There is a boy living in Birmingham, England, whose eyes, since a disease which affected them when he was a child, are said to have acquired a microscopic power which enables him to see minute objects magnified to such a degree as to excite the astonishment of scientific persons.

Two boys out in Illinois, according to the newspaper account of the affair, were having a harmless tussle about a love affair a few days ago, "when a big, blundering peacemaker came along, and in his endeavor to restore tranquillity killed one of the combatants."

It has often been stated that the mountain towns in New England are lapsing back into primitive desolation, and now it is reported that a school district in the town of Warwick, Mass., has not a family living within its limits, and is fast being overgrown with timber.

An Omaha youth fell in love with a lady's picture in a specimen show-case, hunted up the original and married her. The show-case manufacturers and photographers now have to work night and day to fill orders from the still single girls.

A man in Nashville, Tenn., much reduced in circumstances, recently found, on turning over some old papers in a neglected bureau drawer, a bank certificate of deposit for $1,375, received in the days of his prosperity, and since forgotten.

The Philadelphia *Ledger* says a New York, printer has just died who, though born on West Broadway, was never on a ferry-boat in his life, never saw Central Park, and had not been further up town than Bleecker street in thirty years.

A well-known "rough" in Worcester, Mass., in undertaking to "put a head" on a peaceable citizen of that place, the other night, came near losing his own, and after being soundly thrashed, was handed over to the police.

There are said to be ten different organizations in Canada, having in view the annexation of that country to the United States.

A CHESTNUTING TOGETHER.

BY LOUISE S. UPHAM.

The dim old woods were sere and brown,
The merry songsters gone,
And purpling mists rose cold and chill,
Where summer rills had run;
But what cared I for barren fields,
Or hazy Autumn weather,
When, hand in hand, sweet Nell and I
Went chestnuting together?

I shook the trees; from loaded boughs
The nuts came rattling fast;
She garnered well, and all too soon
The happy hours flew past:
"How glorious it would be," thought I,
"Through fair or cloudy weather,
If Nell and I could *always* go
A chesnuting together!"

I oped the prickling burs, to shield
Her tender hands, and said,
"'Tis ever thus: the thorns and burrs
With flowers and fruits are wed;
You'll need a strong and willing hand
For life's tempestuous weather,
To guard as now, when you and I
Go chestnuting together."

* * * * *

It's twenty years ago to-day,
Since, hand in hand, we stood
And plighted there our troth, beneath
The old love-lighted wood;
And now a maiden just as sweet,
In just such hazy weather,
My Nellie's child and neighbor Will
Are chestnuting together!

They stand to-day where we stood then,
At the fording of Life's stream;
For them th' entrancing hours pass by
In the same delicious dream;
For love will live while time shall keep
Its fair and cloudy weather,
And youth and maidens long will go
A chestnuting together.

◆

A BONE of CONTENTION;

—OR—

The Waldemar Succession.

By MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HAMPTON MYSTERY," "THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME," "THE LADY OF KILDARE," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," "A DARING GAME," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER LV.

WHEREIN SEVERAL TRAGEDIES ARE BLENDED.

The evening was soft and mild, with a light, pleasant breeze, the blue sky was all aglow with stars. From the dampness and the grim shadows of the lonely fens came the piping cries of water-fowl, the trill of some belated bird, or the song of a nightingale. The smell of hawthorn was in the air, and the noxious breath of swamp flowers mingled with the malaria that broods above the fens. There was a strange hush, a soft, sweet stillness, broken only by sounds such as we have mentioned.

Lord Waldemar and the Hungarian Countess, seated side by side in the low basket chaise, drawn by a fat and shaggy pony, drove slowly over the narrow, ill-paved road, bordered with ditches and with wide stretches of undrained fen. Both were silent. The Countess was looking straight forward with big anxious eyes, her face deadly white, and a look upon it of awful suspense and anxiety. His lordship wondered at her, even while his own soul was tortured with strange hopes and fears, and his own anxieties pressed heavily upon him.

He reached out his hand and tucked closer about her the carriage rug, and met a look from her blue and lovely eyes that went to his heart.

"You are worn out, dear Lady Rothsmere," he said, with unconscious tenderness. "All this has been too much for you. I believe that you have not slept since leaving London. I ought not to have allowed you to come to the Cypresses to-night. Your great heart and sympathetic nature make you feel too acutely the troubles of others."

"The long suspense will soon be over," said the Countess, in a low, quivering voice. "We shall soon be there."

"How pleasant it would be, if we were only care-free, to ride on forever under the starlit skies of such nights as this," said Lord Waldemar, with unwonted sentimentality. "Yet I must seem almost a grandfather to you, Countess. You are a mere girl still. Were you many years married to Count Rothsmere?"

"Some twelve years."

"He was many years older than you, I have heard. Was—was his loss so terrible as to leave a great blank in your life which can never be filled?" asked the stern old Baron, with a thrill of eagerness in his voice.

The beautiful Countess hesitated, and answered:

"Count Rothsmere was one of the truest, noblest, and most unselfish gentlemen who ever lived, my lord, and I loved him truly, tenderly, and most earnestly—perhaps not with youthful ardor; no, not with that, but still I loved him. And he made me his idol. All the garnered strength and sweetness of his great nature he lavished upon me. He was called by the world eccentric, cold-hearted, ambitious, a scheming statesman; but I knew him as he was, a noble, strong-natured, great-souled man. Ah, my lord, he was my shelter, my stronghold, and when I lost him I was bereft."

"Have you children, Countess?"

"My marriage with Count Rothsmere was not blessed with children, my lord, but my husband's sons, all older than I, are brothers and sons to me. They all love me even as I love them."

"If they did not love you, Lady Rothsmere, they would be barbarians, or worse," cried the Baron gallantly, yet earnestly. "I have known you but a short time, Countess, but a few short weeks, but I love you as I never expected to love any woman again. You are young enough to be my daughter, but my heart has gone out to you with a tenderness of which I had not deemed myself capable. I can offer you no first love of a passionate young heart. I yielded that to my dear wife who is now in heaven," and he raised his grand eyes reverently. "She is still to me what no other woman can ever be, but I love you with the clinging devotion of my riper years, with a yearning tenderness such as a father might feel for an idolized child. Other men will and do woo you, dear Lady Rothsmere, with love, but none with greater love than that I bear you."

"Don't!" she whispered, putting up her hand. "Don't speak so to me. You will be sorry, my lord."

"And why? You are not promised to be married?"

"No, O no. But I shall never marry again."

"You are young to say that. At thirty years of age, one does not lay aside all human ties so easily, to walk on alone forever. Dear Lady Rothsmere, I am a lonely old man, childless, loveless. Come to me. Be my wife. Make sunshine in my lonely house; let me have your smiles and your sunny eyes to greet me when I come home; let me have your noble companionship, the benefit of your bright and sparkling intellect, and your keen wisdom. I shall be a greater and a better man for your influence, dear Lady Rothsmere, and I will love you with such rare devotion as even Count Rothsmere could hardly have felt or shown. Come to me then, I implore you."

His stern face softened into a yearning tenderness; his grand eyes glowed with a great and tender love for her. He put out his arm as if to draw her nearer to him, but she shrank back from him, her blue eyes full of grief and a sort of terror.

"I—I appreciate your kindness, my lord," she said, in a faltering voice, "but it may not be. I cannot become your wife. I can never make sunshine in your lonely house. I do not love you as a wife should love her husband. It may not be, dear Lord Waldemar."

The Baron stifled a groan.

"I have permitted myself to hope," he murmured. "I have been foolish, idiotic, but I thought you liked me, Lady Rothsmere; I fancied you were pleased when I came near."

"I do like you, my lord," said the Hungarian Countess distressfully. "I like you, and I admire you. I love to talk with you; to be in your presence; to hear your ringing speeches in Parliament; but I love you as a daughter rather than as a wife. Ah, if God had only been so good as to give me a father like you!"

"I wish you were my daughter," cried Lord Waldemar, with a fierce energy. "Since you will not be my wife, I wish you could be my daughter. But I have no son for whom I might beg your hand in marriage. You will go back to Vienna, or to Hungary, and forget the foolish old Englishman who loved you; but he can never forget you!"

"My lord, this lovely young Honor Glint whom we are seeking is undoubtedly your own grandchild. She is bright, spirited, loving, talented and noble. She will take the place you would fain give me, and her love will cause you to forget me."

The stern old Baron trembled, and hot tears dropped from the fiery eyes so unused to weeping.

"I shall never forget you," he said brokenly. "I have been mad to think that you could love me, dear Lady Rothsmere, but I shall never cease to love you. A sort of fatality has attended me through life," and his tones took a bitter inflection. "My wife died young. My son, a frank, generous youth, proved false and treacherous, and married the daughter of my enemy. My nephew—you know what he is. And now my last hope is shattered. I shall go down to my grave lonely and forsaken."

"My lord, our lives are what we make them. Forgive me, but have you not laid your life waste with your own hand? Your son loved you—he must have loved you—yet you suffered him to die in poverty in a foreign land. My lord, we get what we deserve in this world nearly always. God metes out to us draughts of bitterness sometimes, but oh, the draughts we mix for ourselves are bitterer still, a thousand-fold."

"You do not understand, my lady," cried his lordship eagerly. "My son married a designing woman, the daughter of a man I hated, and I could not forgive him. You cannot comprehend English prejudices, Lady Rothsmere."

"Yet I am English born and bred."

"*You?* I did not think it."

"I was a governess in the family of Count Rothsmere," said the Countess, "for nearly two years before he married me. I was recommended to him by a mutual friend. His daughter, a young lady, was ill of an incurable disease which was not painful, but which debarred her from society. She lived at her father's castle in Hungary, and I went there to teach her English, and to serve as her companion. I met her brothers and father in continual social intercourse. The father knew my history, and he grew to love me as we bent together over his daughter's bed and she faded day by day before our eyes. She saw his love, and begged me to make him happy before she died. They were all good to me, and all loved me, although I was not noble nor wealthy. And I loved the old Count and pitied him. We were married a week before his daughter died. She died in my arms, and it was on my bosom the old Count wept for her. He never repented his marriage to me, and every day I thanked God that He had given me such safe refuge. You see, my lord, I can comprehend English prejudices, being English."

"I believed you to be of foreign birth, although you speak English with such perfect purity. Then you are not Hungarian at all?"

"Only by adoption; but my husband being a Hungarian, I am a Hungarian Countess."

"You must have left England very early. But, dear Lady Rothsmere, all this does not affect the point we were discussing. You are a tender, loving woman, and cannot understand a man's bitter and relentless hatred of his enemy. I do not like you to think me barbarous for my treatment of my son. You may have heard a garbled story, and that may have prejudiced you against me. Men are not like women. The passions of men are like armed giants, trampling down all softer emotions."

"Ah, do I not know it?" said the Countess softly. "Have I not suffered all my life from one man's hatred?"

"You, Countess? Great Heaven! you?"

"Yes, I, my lord," she answered, with a sudden passionate thrill running through her tones, uplifting her pale, sorrowing face. "My life has been blighted; I have wept above a grave wherein my youth and hopes and early love all lie buried. I have mourned as dead for many years one who lived, but for whom I would have died: and all this for one man's hatred of another. Ah, do I not understand the bitterness of a man's hatred, when its curse has lain upon me all these years, and its shadow rests upon me still?"

"But, dear Lady Rothsmere, how can any man have hated one so innocent and lovely as you?"

"The Scriptures say that 'the sins of the father shall be visited upon the children,' my lord, and my father's sins have been visited upon me. My history is very like to that of your son's wife. I was a child of seventeen, innocent, thoughtless, loving; a mere child, my lord, in my ignorance of the world. I had a lover, noble, young, generous and impulsive. He was the son of my father's enemy. But what did Romeo and Juliet care for the feud of the Montagues and Capulets? Could that feud prevent their love for each other? And so I and my young lover, like Romeo and Juliet, clung to each other in a deathless love. My father died suddenly and disgracefully. I was to be turned from my home, and I had nowhere to go. Then my lover with his tender, chivalric devotion begged me to marry him. He said we had but to go to his father and kneel at his feet, and he would forgive and bless us. My lover had a cousin, a wily young man, who urged us on to the irrevocable step, promising to secure our forgiveness. We were married. We went to my husband's father, weak, trembling and full of misgivings, and implored his forgiveness. He—he spurned us from his door!"

A groan of anguish was wrung from the Baron.

"The night was chill and wet. We went out into it heart-broken. I clung to my young husband's arm," said the Countess, in the same thrilling voice, "and told him that we would make a home somewhere together. But, O God! the world seemed against us. We were like two babes in the wood. We went to London, but our little money began to melt. We went to Brussels—"

"Ah-h!"

"But work eluded us. I urged my husband to abandon me, the cause of his misfortunes. But from the day of our marriage until the moment he died in my arms, he was brave and steadfast and loving; he had always tender words for me; and when he died, his last words were, 'My wife, I loved my father, and I love him still. His anger against me has planted thorns even in my dying pillow, but notwithstanding all the anguish, the remorse, the privations, I bless God that you are my wife. Having been so blest, I can go down to my early grave without a murmur.'"

The quivering voice broke down. The Baron uttered a quick, uncontrollable sob.

"Ah, the story must be very like to that of your son's young wife," said the Countess, after a little. "I was a widow at nineteen, my lord. I buried my husband in a grave far from his native land. My anxieties, my long attendance upon him, and my privations—for I had to starve myself to give him the luxuries he needed—all told upon me. I fell ill, and was taken to a public hospital. For weeks I wavered there between life and death. I was at last removed to the convalescent ward, and another patient was put in my place. By some oversight my name, which had been placed against the number of my bed, was not crossed off and replaced with the name of the new patient. She was friendless in Trieste, and a stranger. She died. Her death was announced under my name, and the gentleman who had employed my husband as tutor to his sons caused her to be buried by my husband's side, and under my name. It was weeks after that that I was discharged from the hospital, and then I crept forth, weak and strangely altered, to find myself unrecognized, my very name taken from me, and myself supposed to be dead."

The Baron stared at her now with fiery eyes.

"I had a child—a baby. I found that her nurse, believing me dead, had started with the child for England, to convey her to her grandfather. I traced the nurse to Malta. I found a fever raging there, and discovered that the nurse had been seized with it, and had been driven from the inn where she had taken shelter, the child being driven forth also. I found that an English woman and a little child had both died of fever, within a week thereafter, in a peasant's house in the outskirts of Valetta, and the description of the two corresponded with the description of my nurse and my child. I believed them dead. I went back to Trieste. I found my husband's employer and told him that I was childless, homeless, starving. He gave me shelter, and his good wife, for whom I had named my child, found me a situation as governess and companion to Lord Rothsmere's daughter. I never came back to England until now, and now I find that my child I mourned as dead is living. My lord, by the instinct the good God has implanted in every mother's heart, I have recognized my daughter in young Honor Glint! Honor Glint is my child!"

The Baron struggled to speak, but a host of conflicting emotions held him dumb. He gasped for breath. His eyes regarded the Countess wildly.

Suddenly she started up with a ringing shriek, pointing to the westward, where a lurid glow was irradiating the sky, and where forked flames were leaping upward.

"God be merciful!" cried Lord Waldemar, finding voice. "It is the Cypresses! The Cypresses is on fire!"

CHAPTER LVI.

"WHOSE END IS PEACE!"

On capturing Honor Glint from the cottage of Mrs. Williams, and forcibly conveying her to the dog-cart, Darrel Moer and Grimrod had made all haste to reach the Cypresses with their young captive. The manager kept his hand in a brutal pressure upon the girl's mouth, to prevent her possible outcries, and held her down upon the seat in a grip like iron, while Darrel Moer drove as rapidly as possible over the roughly paved road. The shrieks of Mrs. Williams soon ceased to be heard. The drive of five miles was performed in a dead and ominous silence, broken only by the clatter of the horse's hoofs and the clatter of the wheels.

The couple reached the "haunted house" among the fens, approaching it from the road by the paved way, and driving around to the rear door. Grimrod descended with the girl in his arms, and Moer turned the tired horse into the stable yard and sounded a vigorous peal upon the knocker.

Miss Bing came to the door.

"I tell you they are not here," she began testily, protruding her head. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Moer! And you've found the girl! I thought she had escaped to London, and that you were gone after her."

Grimrod pushed past the woman with his burden, entering the kitchen.

"Better take her up to her room," said Moer hoarsely.

"It's all ready for her," said Miss Bing. "This way."

She seized a lighted candle and led the way up to the room Honor had so long occupied. The girl was released and set upon her feet. The fastenings of the windows and doors were narrowly examined, and Miss Bing and the two villains went into the hall, locked the door, and descended to the kitchen, leaving their prisoner in the midst of chill and darkness.

"Now give us some supper, quick," said Moer, dropping himself heavily upon a settle. "We've got work before us."

"Where did you find the girl?" asked Miss Bing, stirring up her fire.

"About five miles from here, at the first cottage beyond the farmer's here."

"Have you seen anything of them Londoners?" demanded Miss Bing—"Lord Waldemar and Sir Hugh Tregaron, along with the Somersham constable?"

"*Who?*" cried Grimrod, in a fierce yell.

"Lord Waldemar and Sir Hugh Tregaron, sir," said Miss Bing, leaping backward in affright. "They came after midnight last night and asked for Miss Glint, and searched the house, and Sir Hugh came again with a constable this very afternoon—"

"The devil!" ejaculated Grimrod. "They are on our track!"

"My uncle is following his investigations in regard to the girl's parentage," said Moer huskily. "They have followed us here. They suspect our designs. They mean to rescue the girl."

"They are likely to come back at any moment," said Miss Bing.

The two men looked at each other as if appalled.

"It's life and death with us," said Grimrod, his Mephistophelean face darkening as with a thunder-cloud, and a sudden glare of lightning shooting from his eyes. "I am reduced to poverty, Moer. All our hope is in Hilda's claims upon Lord Waldemar. If this girl be dead, Lord Waldemar can never prove that she is aught to him. He cannot disprove Hilda's claims, or cast her off."

"If we poison her, they may come before we can bury the body," muttered Moer, starting and listening.

"Yes; there must be no body found if they come. They will be back here at any moment. I almost fancy I can hear them coming. The girl's safe in her room. We must burn down the house with her in it, and escape to London. They must find us there on their return. The fire must seem the result of an accident."

They lost no time in deliberation. Miss Bing refused to assist them in their preparations, but made no attempt to change their purpose. They procured some old straw beds and piled them before Honor's door. They found cans of oil, and one can of inflammable burning fluid, and poured these on the dry wainscoted walls. Then they seized the burning sticks, and took up pans of living coals from the kitchen hearth, and emptied the latter in the straw beds, and with the former they set the walls in a running blaze. They fired the furniture, and heaped burning sticks in every room, and fanned the flames carefully, opening the windows to give air to the fire, as soon as they were under way.

The interior of the house was now all ablaze—the flames leaping from the open windows in the front.

Sir Hugh Tregaron, the constable, and Mrs. Williams, were approaching the house, their horse at a mad gallop. They saw the blaze, comprehended its cause, and turned up to the house from the road at an increasing speed. As they reached the lawn, the young Baronet sprang out and dashed around the dwelling with the speed and fury of a madman.

The horse reared in affright. Mrs. Williams sprang out, and the constable drove back toward the road, halting the animal in a little shadowed grove, where he hitched him. The officer then hastened to rejoin Sir Hugh and Mrs. Williams.

Meanwhile Moer and Grimrod had returned toward the kitchen, scorched and blackened, looking like two demons, firebrands still in their hands. Miss Bing stood in the rear door, in an attitude of flight, her bundle in her hand.

"I thought I heard wagon wheels," she said. "They're coming! They're coming!"

She sprang forward, crossed the stable yard, and plunged into the fens.

The two villains were about to rush after her, seeking safety in the same direction, when Sir Hugh Tregaron, in a whirlwind of fury and excitement, dashed around the house, and was upon them. Darrel Moer rushed past him and escaped.

Grimrod essayed to dash past also, but Sir Hugh met him with a fierce and determined onslaught, striking him a blow with his naked fist upon his temple that stunned the villain, and caused him to drop heavily upon the ground like a log.

At that moment a wild and piercing scream came from an upper chamber of the burning house—a scream in Honor's voice.

Sir Hugh spurned the senseless body of the manager with his foot and dashed into the burning hall. He drew down his hat over his eyes and plunged through the black smoke and blinding flame to the stairway. He remembered the position of Honor's prison chamber, and he knew she must now be there.

The staircase, being of wood, was all ablaze. Sir Hugh mounted it, the flames catching his garments, and the steps crumbling under his feet. The balusters fell with a crash before he had reached the top of the steps. The old house had been drying many years, and would have made fine food for fire even without the inflammable oil and liquid.

The upper hall was all afire. The air was hot and burning. Sir Hugh's clothes were burning in spots. His hands were scorched. He gained the door of Honor's room, but a very wall of fire interposed between him and it, and he could not cross it.

Another scream came from the girl's room, and he could hear her running to and fro in her terror, with wild, pitiful moans.

How the fire seemed to whirl, and roar, and crackle! One might have fancied it a living demon rollicking and sporting.

Sir Hugh dashed in the door of Miss Bing's room. It was burning too. The bed was one red and flaming mass, and the walls and ceiling were afire. The window was open to feed the blaze.

Sir Hugh staggered to the door leading into Honor's room, and hurled himself against it. It yielded—it gave way.

He leaped into the prison chamber, now full of blinding, suffocating smoke, but he could not see its inmate.

"Honor!" he shrieked sharply. "Come to me—to Hugh! Here I am!"

A wild cry of joy went up out of that flame-shot darkness, and the girl bounded toward him. He picked her up as if she had been a child. She clasped her arms around his neck. He bounded with her to the window of Miss Bing's room. He dashed out the sash with a chair. He climbed the window-sill, with the girl in his arms. The fire roared in his ears, his sight was blurred. He trembled and clutched at the window-frame, and a great fiery wall rose up behind him, showing that all escape through the house was cut off.

A shriek from many voices mingled came up from the lawn beneath.

The constable was there with Grimrod, whom he had secured as a prisoner. Mrs. Williams was there, panic-stricken and weeping. The Hungarian Countess was there, on her knees, her wild blue eyes uplifted, her white face full of horror. Lord Waldemar was there, pale as death and trembling.

"Oh, my God!" groaned the old Baron. "If they had but a ladder! Must we stand here and see them die?"

Sir Hugh's figure swayed on the window-sill. A long forked tongue of fire shot out at him from the fiery wall behind him. Gathering all his forces, clasping the girl closer to his brave heart, he gave a leap forward and shot down through space.

He loosened his hold upon Honor as he descended, and she fell apart from him, falling at Lady Rothsmere's feet, stunned, frightened, but uninjured.

The Countess swooped forward, with a cry that rang far and wide, and caught the girl in her arms.

"Mine! mine!" she cried. "My own little Hilda!"

The constable ran to Sir Hugh's assistance. The young Baronet gathered himself up, hurt, bruised, but not seriously injured.

Mrs. Williams crowded toward Honor, laughing and crying in a breath.

"I have the first right to her," she said, resenting the foreign lady's interference. "I am her old nurse Margaret Cropsey—"

The Countess looked up, and the lurid glow of the burning house fell on the lovely face.

Mrs. Williams retreated a step in amazement.

"It is my old mistress, Mrs. Wallace Floyd!" she gasped. "The grave has given up its dead!"

"Yes, Margaret, it is I!" said the Countess softly.

Honor looked up bewildered and dazed, recognizing Lady Rothsmere.

"Oh, child, child!" gasped Mrs. Williams. "I was Margaret Cropsey before I married John Williams; I was your old nurse, and this lady is your own mother."

One look upward into the radiant tender eyes of the Hungarian Countess was enough to convince Honor of the truth of this assertion. She yielded to her mother's embrace without questioning.

Sir Hugh and Lord Waldemar looked on with tears of sympathy.

Grimrod gnashed his teeth in rage, and struggled with his bonds.

"Oh, this joyful night!" said Mrs. Williams, weeping. "I never looked to see it. I thought my poor little nurseling was dead. After they discharged me from the hospital at Marseilles I had not my right mind for a year, and by that time every trace was lost to my poor darling. John Williams, a sailor, brought me home from Marseilles and was my friend, and I married him a couple of years later; but I have never ceased to mourn for my little Miss Hilda, who I thought had died of the fever at Malta. I never remembered going on any vessel with her, and never knew who took me to Marseilles. But the long sorrow is over—the long joy is at hand!"

Sir Hugh, all scorched and blackened, looked still bewildered.

"Is the Hungarian Countess Mrs. Wallace Floyd, my lord, and Honor's mother?" he asked.

The old Baron answered by going up to the young girl and taking her in his arms and kissing her, saying:

"I recognize you as my granddaughter, the real Hilda Floyd, Honor. Other proofs may come later, but I recognize you now as my descendant and my heiress, the next in the line of the Waldemar succession, as fully as I shall hereafter. God bless you, my dear child. You have taken my heart by storm!"

He embraced her tenderly and gave her into Tregaron's arms.

Then the grand old lord approached the Countess, who stood alone, lovely and rapturous, with blue ecstatic eyes and a face full of gratitude to Heaven, and said to her humbly, with tears:

"I have been an old fool. I have been wicked and revengeful, and I despise myself. Will you forgive me? For the sake of my poor dead son, to whom you clung so faithfully, will you forgive me, my daughter?"

"Father!" whispered the Countess, in a voice that thrilled him with holy emotions, and a deeper tenderness for her than he had yet known. "Dear father!"

She crept into his arms, and his tears fell on her fair head.

Grimrod had been fighting desperately with his bonds, and had loosened them. He now sprang up and drew his pistol, while he retreated. The constable leaped upon him. Grimrod fired. The officer knocked up the weapon, and the ball shot into the manager's brain, killing him instantly.

Lord Waldemar, Sir Hugh Tregaron, Lady Rothsmere, Honor, and Mrs. Williams, all returned to Somersham in the wagon, leaving the dog-cart for the use of the constable.

Hours later, while the party were seated in Lady Rothsmere's room at the hotel, discussing all these strange mysteries, Honor produced her onyx ball, and the Countess gave it into the Baron's hands.

He recognized it as an ornament that had belonged to his wife, and had been given by her to her son. He touched a spring set secretly amid the encircling diamonds, and the onyx ball flew open. It was hollow, and contained a letter crumpled into the smallest possible space.

This letter had been written by Wallace Floyd upon his death-bed, and was addressed to his father. It implored Squire Floyd to forgive him, and to be merciful to his poor young wife and child. It detailed a long course of perfidy on the part of Darrel Moer, describing how Moer had urged on the marriage of young Floyd with Janet Arlyn, and how Moer had reported messages from Squire Floyd to the effect that Janet was not to blame for her father's shortcomings, and that he—Squire Floyd—had no dislike to her, and that were Wallace married to her he would accept her as a daughter. There were some last sad words of adieu from the son to the father, words so sad that old Lord Waldemar burst into a tempest of sobs and went to his own room, and was seen no more until morning.

But from that night he was changed. His harsh, dictatorial manner yielded to a grave gentleness that sat well upon his stern visage.

The next day the party returned to London. They drove to Lord Waldemar's house in Park Lane and found that Darrel Moer had arrived in town before them, and taken away his wife and Mrs. Watchley, as well as a store of money from the Baron's desk. The precious trio were not pursued, and escaped to the Continent in safety. There they wandered about like Ishmaels, until their money was all gone. Darrel Moer died of small-pox in Italy during the next year, and Mrs. Watchley, contracting the disease, also died. Before her death she made a certified statement of the fraud Grimrod and she had endeavored to practice upon Lord Waldemar, and sent it to his lordship.

Hilda also suffered from the same loathsome disease, but recovered, despoiled of all her prettiness. Soured and desperate, poor and fallen from all her high estate, she married a travelling courier, a German, who beats her now and then, and makes her life miserable. Assuredly her insolent temper has long ere this been curbed.

The name of Hilda had become distasteful to Lord Waldemar, and Honor never adopted it. On the very day of her arrival in London, Capt. Glint arrived at the house in Park Lane, in a state of mind bordering upon frenzy. He had believed her murdered, having received the letters announcing her strange disappearance. His testimony, added to that of Mrs. Williams, was sufficient to establish Honor's identity beyond all question. Honor tried to abate his just anger against his wife and his wife's daughter, but he would not be appeased. Having discovered the falseness of Mrs. Glint's nature, he dismissed her and her children from his house, making suitable provision for his wife. She did not need it long, however, dying of fever in the next year. Clarette was forced to give up her fine lady ideas and to apprentice herself to a milliner, in order to procure a support.

Miss Bing was never seen after her escape upon that night of the fire into the fens. It is supposed she must have perished by some accident or fatality, but no one ever sought in the stagnant waters or among the tall rushes for her body. Her brother left England secretly by an early steamer, and went to Canada, where he was killed in a tavern brawl.

Honor was recognized as Lord Waldemar's heiress and successor, and her introduction to society was a marked success. The Hungarian Countess of Rothsmere presides over Lord Waldemar's house, and is his cherished and beloved daughter. He finds rest, peace and sunshine in her society, and he makes remorseful atonement to her for his long-ago harshness to her and his son. Wallace Floyd's bones repose in the tomb of the Floyds, and are marked by an inscription recording his virtues. The old lord clings to his beloved daughter-in-law all the closer now, since last year he gave away his lovely young granddaughter to be the wife of Sir Hugh Tregaron. The youthful Lady Tregaron, with her unique beauty, sweetness and loveliness, is a star at the English court, a sun in her own home, and has won what so many fought for, that bone of contention—the Waldemar succession.

THE END.

[We begin the new year with another magnificent story by our distinguished contributor, Mrs. HARRIET LEWIS. It is entitled—

THE HAUNTED HUSBAND;

OR,

LADY CHETWYND'S SPECTRE.

MRS. LEWIS'S stories are as popular on the other side of the Atlantic as they are on this. They are invariably republished in England—stolen from the *Ledger*, without credit. "THE HAUNTED HUSBAND" is one of her very best.]

◆

CHOKING A VERBOSE LAWYER.

Old Sam. Locke was a sensible New England farmer, who, following in the footsteps of his sons, moved into the Western country; and his home in the new region was in a large and thriving town. On a certain occasion Uncle Sam. was called to serve upon a jury for the district court, and among the cases brought forward for trial was one which had neither merit nor demerit, being one of those baseless actions which might have been settled by a single word of conciliation by either party, and the consideration of which at stake was paltry in the extreme. In short, the jury, to a man, would have felt justified in awarding a verdict upon the toss of a copper. Under such circumstances, as was natural, the jury leaned in sympathy toward the defendant.

The profitless case had dragged along until both court and jury were tired. At length the counsel for the defence arose to make his plea. He had a voluminous brief, and was known to be long-winded and prolix—a man who prided himself on his oratory. With a majestic "ahem!" he spread himself, and commenced,—

"Gentlemen of the jury,"—

"Hold on!" cried Uncle Sam., rising, and pulling out his watch. "We've got pretty well into this case, and before you go on, I've got just one remark to make: *If you talk more than five minutes we'll give the verdict against you.*"

The lawyer wisely took the hint, and with a great choking he submitted his case to the "intelligent" jury without argument, and was rewarded by the paltry verdict he sought.

S. C., JR.

◆

THE MISER'S WILL.

Old Skinflea was dying. He had lived a long, hard, laborious life, denying himself all pleasures but the one pleasure of accumulating, and all comforts but the one comfort of hoarding. He had never given to humanity a warm, generous thought, and he had never gained a warm or generous impulse for his own heart. He had never brought a smile of gladness upon the face of another, and he had never won a smile for himself. He had never sought to help his fellows, and none had care for him. Alone he had lived, worshipping his gathering gold, and his only prayers had been for more gain and for more usance. And now the old man was dying, and his lawyer had prepared his will and brought it to his bedside for his signature. The dying man took the pen in his quaking grasp, and groaned aloud.

"My soul!" he muttered, "and this is the end of it all! This is all that is to come of my life of toil and hardship. For more than half a century I have worked and drudged like a slave. I have seen my wealth grow and increase, and I have worked harder and more persistently. I have denied myself all pleasure and all comfort that the golden pile might swell and multiply, and now, in one brief moment—by one scrawl of my pen—it slips from me forever!—All my hoarded wealth—my gold, and my stocks, and my houses, and my broad acres—I must leave it all, all behind. Oh, this is what makes it so hard and so bitter to die!"

C.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, Editor and Proprietor.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1872.

We always stop the Ledger at the expiration of the year, or of the time for which it is paid, so that if you wish to continue it, it would be well to renew your subscriptions at least one week before the time expires.

Better Than Ever.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

FOR THE NEW YEAR, 1873.

THE GREAT FAMILY PAPER.

Instructive and entertaining as the *Ledger* has been in the past, we hope and intend to make it still more instructive and entertaining in the future. Our experience is greater than heretofore, and our ambition to make the *Ledger* the best paper of the kind published in the world, is undiminished.

It is the aim of the *Ledger* to cultivate a taste for reading in the rising generation, and at the same time, by the character of its contents, to contribute constantly to their moral and intellectual improvement and growth.

An epicure might as well undertake to write down what he would have for dinner every day for twelve months to come, as for us to attempt, at this time, a catalogue of all the good things that will be spread before the readers of the *Ledger* in 1873. Our old subscribers will bear us witness that all the promises we have ever made have always been more than fulfilled. We never let slip an opportunity to obtain any really good and desirable thing. Expense and trouble never stand in our way. And in this respect, as it has been in the past, so it will be in the future.

The *Ledger* is particularly devoted to the interests and welfare of the young. A vast number of questions about lovers' quarrels, propositions of marriage, plans for housekeeping, and the best means of brightening the future of youthful married couples, are answered in its columns.

One great and guiding principle with us is to inculcate the sentiments of self-respect and self-reliance, and thus to strengthen and render more manly the characters which are just assuming form, to endure through all their days.

The *Ledger* is always full of life. Nobody ever complains that even a single number is dull.

It has the largest number of great and distinguished writers.

It contains the purest, sweetest and most delightful stories, striking narratives, and instructive biographical and historical sketches.

It has the most popular and carefully prepared collection of scientific facts.

Many of the most distinguished clergymen of the country write for it.

All our favorite old writers will continue to write for the *Ledger*; and we are always on the keen look-out for any new developments of *real* rising genius.

OUR TERMS FOR 1873—NOW IS THE TIME TO SUBSCRIBE.

Single copies, $3 per annum; four copies, $10, which is $2.50 a copy; eight copies, $20. The party who sends us $20 for a club of eight copies, (all sent at one time,) will be entitled to a copy *free*. Postmasters and others who get up clubs, in their respective towns, can afterwards add single copies at $2.50. No subscriptions taken for a less period than one year. Canada subscribers must send twenty cents in addition to the subscription, to pay the American postage. When a draft or money-order can conveniently be sent, it will be preferred, as it will prevent the possibility of the loss of money by mail. The postage on the *Ledger* to all parts of the country is only twenty cents a year, or five cents a quarter, payable at the office where the paper is delivered.

☞ We employ no travelling agents. Address all communications to

ROBERT BONNER, Publisher,
Corner of William and Spruce sts., New York.

Be Kind to the Living.

It is all very well to give men fine funerals when they die, and to write long obituary notices proving them saints uncanonized. It is a good thing to pause—we who must all die some day—for a little moment, to do honor to the dust and ashes yesterday a man. But while we do this, can we not also give a little kindness to the living? Can we not be generous and just and forgiving to those who still have ears to hear and hearts to throb with pain and anxiety?

But no: if a man is still living and does aught to offend us, and is not of our creed or party, we give him no mercy. We mock him, abuse him, caricature him, bear false witness against him, and wait until his funeral comes off to do him justice, and to say, "Though we did not think alike on some points, he was on the whole a good man."

How many hearts might have been saved from breaking by a perusal of their obituary notices; how many might have been comforted by an ante-mortem perusal of the verses on their tombstones! It is after he is dead that we say of the man, "He was brave and good;" of the woman, "She was pure and pretty." The abuse, the sneer, the innuendo, the malicious whisper, the coarse caricature—these are for living, breathing, bleeding human bosoms. Any amount of tombstone praise and funeral pageants that you like; but would it harm us to be a little kinder to the living?

The Senate and Mr. Greeley.

A majority of the United States Senate refused to the friends of Mr. GREELEY an opportunity to deliver brief eulogies upon him on the floor of the Senate Chamber.

Their action was imbittered, narrow, and contemptible. It only injures those who participated in it, however. It had no effect to prevent the people from mourning the great champion of popular rights.

It was not like General CAMERON, distinguished as he is for his generosity of character, to perform so mean a part as he did, by a parliamentary trick, to prevent deserved honors to the dead. Is it possible that the State of New York had, on the floor of the Senate, as we are informed, a native son capable of prompting a less ignoble Senator to this unworthy movement?

—Now is the time for our readers to renew their subscriptions, as we always stop sending the *Ledger* to our subscribers at the expiration of the year, or the time for which it is paid. In this way, no back debts ever accumulate against our readers. We do not stop the paper at the end of the year because we are afraid to trust our subscribers, but because that is the rule we have adopted, and it has proved so far more satisfactory than any other we could devise.

The Death of a Great Journalist.

HORACE GREELEY died a few minutes before seven o'clock on the evening of November 29th, 1872—the day after Thanksgiving. He was sixty-one years old—the same age as FANNY FERN at the time of her decease.

The funeral of Mr. GREELEY took place on the fourth day of December. Without exception, we never saw the remains of any other person followed to the grave by so large a procession.

Among the mourners were the President of the United States, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and very many other distinguished public and private citizens.

Mr. GREELEY possessed a natural constitution of wonderful vitality, and extraordinary powers of endurance. His death was premature for a man of such uncommon physique and of his strictly temperate habits, and was undoubtedly caused by overwork.

Few men have had so many to mourn their decease with unaffected grief. He was generally regarded as pre-eminently the friend of the people.

The most touching circumstance connected with the death of Mr. GREELEY is the fact that the finishing blow to his health, and what, combined with precedent causes, finally broke him down past recovery, was incessant and sleepless watching at the bedside of his dying wife, who preceded him to the tomb only about one month.

The grief of a nation follows him to the grave. The affection of his whole country will preserve and keep green his memory.

Mr. GREELEY'S most interesting and most popular work—"Recollections of a Busy Life"—being his autobiography, was written originally and exclusively for the New York *Ledger*.

Besides this, Mr. GREELEY contributed many occasional articles to our columns.

Unexpected and melancholy as was the end of his days, few men have performed so large an amount of useful work.

Shocking—An End to Runaways.

We have ceased to be shocked at the doings of electricity. We are not even surprised. It flies through the air with its messages of light; it swims the seas, and traverses continents; and yet we are less surprised than when we first heard its infantile peepings and promises. It has done more than it predicted, and its capacity is beyond finite measurement. Here is a Frenchman, M. LIDOT, who has invented a machine for stopping runaway horses instantly. "Electricity, at the control of the driver, is the means employed. The horse is violently shocked, and so much surprised that he instantly comes to a halt." We should think he would.

What a blessing this promises to be! We see in it untold advantages.

The sluggard will have no chance for "a little more sleep, and a little more slumber," with one of these machines attached to the bed post. The dream fairies will come to a sudden halt in their performances, and incontinently disappear.

The debtor will be immediately checked; the defaulter cashiered; and all without the necessity or delay of hunting up an officer of the law.

Elopements will be impossible; and young men and maidens will not be in such danger of dashing headlong into ruin and wretchedness. It is the patent brake for which we have been waiting, and which will keep society from running down hill at break-neck speed.

No more fractious colts, or runaway horses; no more secessions from virtue, or accessions to vice. Even Vesuvius may be checkmated, shocked to her volcanic centre, and the fluent lava halted in its mad and murderous career.

The "gift of gab" distinguishes this generation, but posterity will call upon the electrical machine to do all its talking.

The woods will never echo to the frantic "whoa's!" of distracted drivers, nor terror take possession of our streets when this newly-invented, patent-back-action-electrical brake is brought into use.

President Grant and the Union League—Becoming and Unbecoming Conduct.

Every one was touched by the regard for a political opponent and rival manifested by President GRANT in coming here from Washington to attend the funeral of HORACE GREELEY.

The Union League, on the other hand—of which Mr. GREELEY was long a leading and honored member—showed an absolute want of decency, and a disregard of the common proprieties of the occasion, in giving to Mr. WASHBURNE, the American Minister to France, a grand reception *on the evening of the very day of the funeral.* Mr. WASHBURNE'S relations of old to Mr. GREELEY ought to have been remembered by him sufficiently to cause him to refuse the ovation at such a time.

One Mr. COWDIN, who figured conspicuously at this WASHBURNE banquet, is said to be an aspirant for the appointment to the French mission whenever the present incumbent shall retire. If his conduct in this affair is an indication of his lack of good-breeding, we hope he will not receive it.

Gen. GRANT, to his credit be it said—although an intimate friend of Mr. WASHBURNE, for it was, in fact, Mr. W. who brought him again into the army—peremptorily declined to attend the festivities on account of their taking place on the day Mr. GREELEY was buried.

The Old and the New—Which?

The time was when homicides were roasted alive, or boiled in oil; when robbers were hanged, drawn and quartered, and their ghastly fragments nailed up at conspicuous points to terrify evil-doers; when thieves and forgers were strung up by dozens and scores, with no eye to pity, and no arm to save them. Now-a-days, the worst criminal has an ample show for his life. He is defended by able counsel; he in effect selects his own jury; if any mistake is believed to have been made by the Court on the trial, a writ of error is granted with a stay of proceedings, that a higher Court may review the trial, and see if it was fairly conducted according to law. The ancient mode of treating criminals was barbarous in the extreme. But are we not in danger, on the other hand, of running our modern leniency to them into as great an extreme? We think so.

—The *Ledger* is always full of life. Nobody ever complains that even a single number is dull. If you are not convenient to a news office, *subscribe now*, and you will not miss a single number of the continued stories—and then you will have nothing more to pay for a whole year.

LITERARY WARES.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

To *read and write* is the foundation of literary education. But to write is not simply the formation of sentences with a quill. It is the ability to give a full expression to one's thoughts and feelings. We have already spoken of this. It is an education to be sought by every one, if for no other reason, for the benefit that is derived from it to one's own self, and without regard to the use which may be made of the results of composition. If the writing were never to be seen by any except the writer, were never offered in the literary market, or published, still the benefit of the habit of composition to one's taste, knowledge, and general power, should encourage every one to practice it.

But now we come to literary work which is *offered in the market*. There have been authors who felt that it was ignoble to write for money. The generation of such seems to have passed away.

There never was any good reason for this squeamishness. Why not a price for the labor of the head, as well as of the hands? Why not a fair price for literary work, as well as professional brain work?

But, though almost every one now is willing to be paid for poem, story, or essay, there yet cling to compositions offered for sale some foolish notions that might as well be dismissed first as last.

When any literary work is presented to a publisher, it becomes an article of merchandise, and must submit to all the laws of commerce applicable to such a case. There is no use in "putting on airs," as if mechanics' work was marketable, but literary work something having aristocratic privileges. A story is a piece of goods thrown on the market, just as is a web of cloth, a suit of furniture, or a hundred yards of carpet. Like them, it must find out a market, and not expect to be bought as a favor, or on a principle of generosity. If it is a good piece of work, if it is offered in a market where such goods are wanted, it will be bought at a price which will enable the buyer to make a profit upon it. Why should the Messrs. SHARPERS buy a book which they cannot sell? No matter how good it is, nor how pitiful that people will not buy it, it is Messrs. SHARPERS' business, of all good literary wares, to select and offer such as people will buy. They are merchants dealing in real values, and not a charity committee dispensing funds to needy people.

The same is true of all publishers of newspapers, magazines, journals, etc.

Authors are apt to think that publishers are hard-hearted men, squeezing out the least possible price to the author, and gobbling up the utmost profit to themselves. But every man who is a good merchant, seeks to buy his goods low and to sell them high. Publishers, as a rule, compare favorably with merchants, in their honorable dealings. We suspect that an inquiry would show that there are few kinds of business in which as much courtesy and generosity are mingled as in the business of selling literary wares.

A man writes a book upon a subject in which not one man in a thousand is interested; he fills it with material which required ten years of digging work; there is enough scholarship in it to set up a whole college of professors. When it fails of a market, a cry goes up against public and publisher! But what is the real case, but that the man has offered to sell what nobody wants to buy? But what if a man should export coal to the coast of Guinea, or send cargoes of ice to Greenland, or offer ten-dollar a yard broadcloth to the miners of the West, or carry libraries of the classics to North American Indians?

What if a man should build in a pioneer village a hundred-thousand-dollar mansion, with all modern improvements, and grumble because nobody would buy it; or expose for sale in New York or Brooklyn articles of food which people generally did not relish?

One would be amazed to see the floods of trash that come to market for sale—soft poems, sentimental platitudes, dull essays, drowsy meditations, pragmatical and narrow criticism, crude discussions of public affairs, endless stories, moral lessons, pious experiences!

For every other profession or business, men think it needful to have some training. But thousands of men offer literary wares in market who have never had experience or training in literary composition, and are no more fitted to authorship than an ordinary axman is to make wood-cuts, or do good wood carving.

There is a ready market for really good writing, adapted to the several living interests of society. Never were such prices paid to essayists, historians, poets, writers of fictions, and journalists. Never was there such demand for first-class literary wares. In general, if men cannot part with their literary work at a fair price, it is because it is not of good quality, or is not adapted to the market.

What Men Know of Women.

Men always believe that they understand women. There is nothing a man generally prides himself on more. He knows when a woman is trying to catch him, and is flattering him, and all that; but when she says: "There's *nobody* whose judgment I rely on as I do on yours, you are so sensible, and so kind;" and when she takes him into the little back room where the *tête-à-tête* is, and tells him all her troubles, and asks him how, if she respects a gentleman, but doesn't love him, and she *can't* love Mr. Sproogles, "how she shall keep him from proposing"—*then* he knows that she is an appreciative little woman, with no art in her.

When, with the most bewitching little velvet cloak—price two hundred dollars—on her shoulders, she declares that she didn't care *how* she looked and just wrapped up well, he knows she has no vanity. When she rushes up to her dear friend Felicia, and kissing her on the cheek, declares that she is so sorry to see her looking so pale, and that she'd like to kill the dress-maker for fitting her dress so badly, he knows that she is amiable—so amiable! And when, after six months of regular calls and constant attention, she replies to his offer—"Oh, I am so taken by surprise! I thought you only a friend. I'm engaged to Mr. Sproogles"—he thinks her a dear, artless soul, and goes away sorrowing.

AUNT POLLY.

The Diamond Swindle.

It will be remembered that the *Ledger* warned the public against investing money in what were called the "Arizona Diamond Fields," as soon as it was attempted to launch that gigantic swindle upon the market. The fact that rubies, diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, and almost every variety of precious stones, were found side by side in the so-called diamond region, was enough to convince any man of intelligence that they had been placed there by human agency. Nature never spreads her precious stones about in that way, any more than she produces apples, pears, apricots, oranges, lemons and peaches all on the same tree.

The persons who initiated the diamond swindle, whereby millions of dollars were drawn from the pockets of some of the sharpest capitalists of California, acted with reckless audacity. They openly bought the rough stones, with which they "salted" their diamond field, in the London market. They took so little pains in preparing their "field" for inspection, that the first intelligent and honest man that visited it, discovered the fraud. But by that time the swindlers had disappeared with their booty, and left the stockholders of the "Company" without the slightest clue to their whereabouts.

THREE LOVES.

A SONNET FROM GOETHE.

BY JOHN G. SAXE.

I have known various loves of women: one
Gave all her soul, (she said,) but kept intact
Her marble lips, and ever seemed to shun
Love's blandishments, as if his lightest act
Were fatal to his life. Another gave
Whatever smiles and kisses could impart
To pleasure me; witholding little, save
What she, alas! had not—a loving heart!
Poor, dear dead flowers!—One with no root in earth,
And one no breath of Heaven's sustaining air,
No marvel briefly they survived their birth;
And then my true-love came—O passing fair
Beyond the twain!—whose soul and sense unite
In perfect bloom for Love's supreme delight!

A LUCKY COUNTERFEIT.

BY JUDGE CLARK.

In the fall of ——, I had occasion to make a trip on horseback through a remote Western State, carrying with me a considerable sum of money. On the way, my horse sickened and died, and finding it impossible immediately to procure another, I resolved, for the present, to continue my journey on foot.

Having proceeded thus for several days, I stopped one evening at a settler's cabin, and solicited lodgings for the night—a request which was readily granted.

My host was a goodly specimen of the backwoodsman. His ingenuous countenance and frank, off-hand manner made it impossible long to remain a stranger in his company. He was a bachelor, living alone, he gave me to understand, but added, with a wink and a blush, that amid the cares of pioneer life, he had not quite forgotten "the girl he had left behind him," and that if I returned that way in the course of a month or two, I might find better entertainment than he was at present able to offer. He had had "a hard row to hoe," he said, but thanks to health, energy, and perseverance, he had succeeded in making a competence at last. It was only that day he had received a thousand dollars in cash, the fruit of years of toil and self-denial, gradually accumulated and kept at interest in trusty hands. "And now, in two days," he continued, "I shall set out to visit the old folks, and glad enough they'll be to see me too, and to find that I've something to show for the blessing they gave me when I left home. And I don't mind telling *you*, though I haven't let it out generally, that I don't expect to come back alone—that is, if Hettie Blake hasn't changed her mind, which I've good reason to believe she hasn't, if I *have* made her wait a good while. But a man isn't a *very* old bachelor at thirty, nor a girl an old maid at twenty-five."

All this, and more, my entertainer rattled off in the first half hour.

"Are you going far?" at length he inquired, in a tone indicative of apology for having thus far monopolized the conversation.

"You will find it a longsome journey afoot," said he, when I had answered his question.

I explained my reason for travelling so at present, and my purpose to purchase another horse the first chance that offered.

"I think I can suit you," said Mr. Burch. My host had already told me his name, and inquired what mine might be.

I was glad to hear him say so, and, as it was yet daylight, we repaired to a log stable not far distant, Mr. Burch leading the way.

I was offered the pick of three horses, for one of which I opened negotiations, and in as little time as, in a Western settler's view, comported with the dignity of such a transaction, a bargain was struck, whereby I became the owner of a spirited young bay and a spare saddle and bridle which Mr. Burch fortunately had on hand.

I paid the price stipulated, and expressing an intention to make an early start next morning, my journey having been already considerably delayed, I put everything in readiness, and proffered payment for the night's accommodation, which Mr. Burch declined, saying he didn't keep tavern, though he made it a rule never to refuse shelter to a traveller.

On reaching the cabin, I was requested to excuse the proprietor "a spell," and, in due time, was invited to sit down to a repast of venison and johnny-cake, on which we supped like princes, but with better appetite.

After supper and a sociable chat of some length, Mr. Burch intimated that as I contemplated leaving early, and might feel fatigued after my long walk, my time of going to bed was at my own disposal. Thanking him for his courtesy, and signifying a wish to retire at once, I was conducted to my sleeping apartment.

The house was what is called a "double cabin," one of the wings of which was allotted as my quarters. Mr. Burch smiled as he saw me glance at the door, which was without other fastening than a wooden latch.

"We've no need of locks here," he said; "we're not civilized enough yet to be infested with either thieves or policemen."

Then bidding me good-night and good-bye at the same time, the hospitable settler withdrew, closing the door behind him.

I was soon sleeping the sleep of the weary, which, if not as peaceful, is often at least as sound as that of the just.

I got up at early dawn, and not wishing to disturb my host, who was not yet stirring, I passed lightly through the passage between the cabins, and made my way to the stable.

My horse had already made a good feed off the hay I had placed in the rack over night; and after waiting till he had finished a few handfuls of oats which I threw into the manger, I saddled and bridled him, and rode off.

I was well pleased with my purchase, whose travelling qualities had not been overrated by his late owner, and late in the afternoon was pushing ahead at a brisk trot, when I heard a clattering of hoofs behind me.

"Halt!" shouted a voice, at which I turned about with a start.

Rapidly approaching was a company of armed horsemen, the foremost of whom presented his rifle.

"Halt!" he repeated, "or I'll let daylight through you!"

Yielding to the summons, which it would have been madness to disobey, I was in a trice surrounded and dragged from my horse.

"What is the meaning of this?" I demanded.

"A cool question that!" sneered the leader of the band.

"At least I have a right to ask it," I replied.

"Sartinly; and prehaps you mean to tell us that Tom Burch wasn't murdered last night, and his house robbed, and that you didn't stop there, and that that isn't his horse; prehaps you'll tell us all that, and expect us to believe it!" answered the former speaker.

"Mr. Burch—murdered!" was all I could ejaculate.

"And may be you mean to tell us it wasn't you that split his head open, and stole his money and his horse?" was the incredulous reply.

"Sarch him!" suggested several at once.

By a luckless fatality the sum found in my possession tallied almost exactly with that known to have been lately received by the murdered man.

"And now, men," called out the spokesman of the party, "all you in favor of findin' the pris'ner guilty, and hangin' him on the spot, will signify it by sayin' '*aye*.'"

The "ayes" had it.

In vain I protested my innocence. In vain I iterated and reiterated the exact truth. Innocence never looked guiltier, nor truth more like falsehood, than they then did, outfaced by circumstances so damning.

"You'd better save your little allowance of breath for prayin' instead of lyin'," was all the answer I got.

A rope was produced with a ready-made noose at the end of it, but no one seemed willing to adjust it. The hangman's office, however necessary, is not one of honor, and few aspire to it.

"Hello! you, Nat. Gates," spoke up a vicious looking man, who till now had kept in the background, "do up this yer job—you've done meaner ones afore—an' I'll give you five dollars."

"Hand her out!" said an ill-favored individual, with a bloated, sottish face.

"Wait till the work's done," said the other.

"Tarms invariably in advance," persisted Nat.

With some reluctance a five-dollar note was produced and handed over. Gates held it up to the light, and was scanning it suspiciously, when a stern, intelligent looking man rode up, whom the crowd saluted as "Colonel."

"Where did that note come from?" he inquired sharply.

"Dick Bryson give it to me jest now," said Gates, "an' I'm blowed ef I believe it's good. Jest pass your judgment on it, Colonel."

The Colonel took the note, and turning it over, glanced at the back.

"Was this note in your possession?" he inquired in the same sharp, quick voice.

The person addressed turned pale, but made no answer.

"Search him," said the Colonel.

Bryson made a movement as if preparing for flight, but a dozen hands grappled him, and from his pocket was speedily drawn a roll of bank-notes.

"Let me see it," said the Colonel.

The package was handed to him, and he examined it hastily.

"You were near committing a terrible mistake, gentlemen," he added. "This roll contains the identical thousand dollars received from me yesterday by our murdered neighbor. I recognize the notes. And that five-dollar bill is one he had gotten from another source, and which, at the same time, he asked me to look at, having doubts of its genuineness. I pronounced it counterfeit, and Burch, in my presence, placed a mark upon it, intending to return it to the person from whom he had received it. But how came you by that horse, sir?" said the Colonel, with a keen glance at me, which I returned steadily.

I repeated the statement I had already made.

"Can you describe the money you paid?" he asked.

I did so minutely.

"That money should either be in Bryson's possession, or in Burch's house," said the Colonel.

A further search of Bryson failed to discover it; but on reaching the murdered man's cabin, the money I had paid him the evening before, answering in all respects to the description I had given, was found in a drawer undisturbed. The crime had doubtless been committed to gain possession of the larger sum, which, with the counterfeit note, was probably kept in a place by itself.

When forced to look on the ghastly corpse of his victim, the new prisoner's courage completely deserted him. He made a full confession, and begged for mercy.

"I think we can proceed safely now," said the Colonel.

Another vote was taken, and another condemnation pronounced, at which I could not help shuddering, though this time it was passed not upon myself.

Not one, but a crowd of executioners now came forward and seized the trembling wretch still piteously pleading for his life. For a time I could not see him, but soon his body darted up rapidly from the midst of those about him, hoisted by many hands pulling at the end of a rope passed over the limb of a tree, a noose at the other end encircling the culprit's neck.

It was a horrible and disgusting sight. The hideous face, distorted in the last agony, the swaying body, the quivering limbs—I could look upon them no longer; and being free to depart, I turned and rode away, sick at heart, and sad withal, as I thought of the aged parents and constant sweetheart, for whom, instead of a joyous meeting with the expected son and lover, tidings so dreadful were in store.

A British Husband's Vengeance.

A wealthy gentleman living in Lancashire, England, becoming jealous of the attentions of a neighbor to his wife, resolved to wreak his vengeance upon him. While he was planning how to avenge himself, the wife and neighbor happened to go on the same train of cars to an adjacent town on the same day, and the husband, securing the services of a professional pugilist, awaited the return of the offender at a convenient point of observation near the railroad station. Just in the dusk of evening the neighbor returned, and so did the wife, and as they walked with the crowd from the station, the husband and the pugilist followed them. On coming to a convenient spot, the husband gave the signal, and the pugilist rushed upon the neighbor and knocked him down. The wife gave a scream and fled, without knowing who had attacked her companion, but supposing the assailants to be robbers. The pugilist then held the prostrate man while, as the evidence before the court states, the husband "pounded him, choked him, and worried him with his teeth." The unfortunate man was subsequently found in a nearly dying condition and taken home. A surgeon examined his wounds and pronounced them exceedingly dangerous, and perhaps fatal. His deposition was taken by a magistrate, and a warrant was issued the next morning for the arrest of his assailants. The husband was taken in custody and held to bail in the sum of £20,000—one hundred thousand dollars—but the pugilist could not be found. As the parties are wealthy and of high social connections, the affair has created a great sensation in Lancashire, and the trial is looked forward to with intense expectations.

—This is the last number of the Ledger for the year 1872. Now is the time to renew for 1873.

Thieves "of Property and Standing."

When DANIEL WEBSTER wanted to pay what he considered a solid compliment to any one, he referred to him as "a man of property and standing." Criminal lawyers have latterly adopted the same course in referring to their clients. "If your Honor please, the defendant is a man of property and standing," exclaims Counsellor Cheatham, pointing with professional pride to his client, who has stolen a few hundred thousand dollars from those who had intrusted him with their money.

That the defaulters who rob banks, insurance companies, railroad companies and trust estates are men of property cannot always be denied. But that they should have any standing, except in the criminal dock, is a disgrace to society.

A Good Law.

According to Act of Congress, any Judge of a United States Court on arriving at the age of seventy, provided he shall have been a Judge ten years, may resign his office and continue to draw his full salary as long as he lives. The first United States Judge to resign under this law is the Hon. SAMUEL NELSON, of this State, who recently retired to private life, after having been on the Supreme Court Bench twenty-seven years. We say this is a good law, for the reason that the Judge who serves the State faithfully is entitled to a fair support when he becomes incapacitated by age.

[From the Du Page County (Iowa) Herald.]

We will say what every one knows to be a truth, that the *Ledger* is the best publication in the United States. When we speak this, we but echo the sentiments of the world at large. All the religious newspapers of the land hesitate not in praising its moral and instructive tone.

GOOD KRIS KRINGLE.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY CALEB DUNN.

The wind blows up through the avenues,
And the streets are white with snow,
And the blinding flakes in a silvery shower
Out from the gray clouds flow.
Jingle, jangle,
Jangle, jingle;
Hark to the bells of old Kris Kringle!

The night is near, but no star is seen,
And the lost moon hides her face,
And a voice is heard muttering coarse and loud—
Muttering in every place:
Jangle, jingle,
Jingle, jangle;
Hark to the winds as they loudly wrangle!

The lights burn bright in many a room
Where the wolf is never seen,
And a flood of song and of laughter free
Is breathed by the mansion's queen:
Jingle, jangle,
Jangle, jingle;
Where are the bells of old Kris Kringle?

Little ones sleep in their cozy beds,
And their dreams are far from few,
And they hear the sound of a music sweet,
As they wander fair dream-land through.
Jingle, jangle,
Jangle, jingle;
Sweetest of voices and harp-notes mingle.

The morn has come, and the dreamers arise
Most anxiously from their beds,
For the stockings stuffed that hang on the walls
Have been all night in their heads.
Jingle, jangle,
Jangle, jingle;
Hurrah for the coming of old Kris Kringle!

A FATAL INHERITANCE.

By ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF THE "EVIL GENIUS," THE "WHITE TERROR," THE "RIVAL SISTERS," ETC.

PART I.

CHAPTER VII.

AN INIQUITOUS WILL.

Crimin took the master of Layton back to his home, and when there made every effort to stay the measures he was determined to take against his fugitive wife. But for once the obstinacy of his cousin proved more than a match for all his wiles.

A note was sent over to a magistrate living a few miles distant, and a warrant procured for searching the house of Dr. Bland for the purpose of regaining possession of the child. At the same time a messenger was dispatched to the nearest railroad station, with orders to stop Mrs. Layton and bring back the whole party. A boat was also manned and sent in pursuit of them on the river, but Crimin tampered with the rowers, and offered them a handsome reward if they would *not* overtake the hapless wife, whose only safety he now believed lay in flight.

Layton passed the day in wandering to and fro about the house, like a spirit doomed for ever to unrest. At intervals he drank deeply, though the brandy he imbibed seemed to brighten in place of dulling his mind, as it usually did after a certain phase of outbreaking violence passed away.

Crimin watched him constantly, and at intervals attempted to speak with him, and picture to him the free and rollicking life they would lead, now that all restraint was removed with the departure of his wife.

But Layton rudely repelled him, and continued to maintain a morose silence, occasionally broken by a volley of bitter imprecations against those who had eluded his brutal power, and were now far away from his cruel hands.

Strange as it may seem, this man, with his debased personal habits, possessed indomitable pride of family and of authority. He had reigned as an autocrat over his dependents, and his wife he only regarded as his chief slave, whose duty it was to accept such treatment as he chose to give her, without complaint or rebellion.

She had fled from him, and the *world* would know that Layton of Layton had been defied and baffled by a *woman!* There lay the sting to his pride, and in the deep and fearful rage that devoured him, he was ready to do *anything* that would enable him to avenge himself upon her in so fearful a manner as to make her life one long dread for the safety of the child she had taken from him.

His soul was turned to bitterness against both mother and daughter, and he was maturing in his mind a plan by which he believed the most exquisite torture could be inflicted on the sensitive woman whose heart was wrapped up in the well-being of her child.

The hours passed on. When dinner was served he ate in sullen silence, repelling every effort of Crimin to introduce conversation, and regarding him at times with a sinister expression which was inexplicable to that scheming person.

When the men sent to Dr. Bland's came back to report their failure, Layton listened to them with gleaming eyes and set teeth, but he said little to them. It was nearly dusk when the boatmen came back with the information that a lady, child and servant, accompanied by Philip Bland, had embarked safely on the *Palmetto* before they reached the landing. He only said:

"They have gone on to Charleston to take the steamer for Baltimore. It may not be too late to send a telegram to stop my lady Alice till she surrenders the child. Then *she* may go to the devil, for all I care. If I have failed here, I can telegraph to Baltimore to have a detective on the look-out when the boat lands, and she'll hardly escape me there."

Crimin ventured to say:

"Why should you attempt to interfere with her, Ned? The child would only be a burden to you, and if separated from her mother, she would probably fret herself sick. You would be sorry to have anything serious happen to Lucia."

"I do not wish any advice from you, James Crimin," said Layton, in tones that were ominously calm. "You have gone over to the enemy, I can plainly see, and I intend to be guided in this matter by no hypocritical counsellor. If you had not played a double part this morning, we could have together frightened old Bland into giving up the child to me. You are trying to baffle me in some way, and for purposes of your own, but I will prove more than a match for you yet."

Crimin shrugged his shoulders, and cynically said:

"It is no concern of mine. There is no reason why *I* should care particularly about the safety of the child. I only think it will be a shameful outrage on your part to use force to tear a baby like that from the arms of her mother."

"The outrage against Alice will be no greater to her than the one she has been guilty of toward me, in abducting my daughter from her legal home and taking her from my protection. I shall commit it, at all events, and I will maintain my right to the possession of Lucia."

The dispatches were written and sent to the nearest telegraphic station, and then Layton sent a messenger with a note to the lawyer who managed all his legal affairs, requesting him to ride over to Layton the following day for the purpose of making his will.

He looked, indeed, as if it was time that his worldly affairs were settled, for the purple flush had faded from his face, and a leaden hue had taken its place, which gave him a most unnatural and ghastly appearance. His eyes looked like balls of living fire, as they rolled restlessly from side to side, and the nervous twitching of his muscles showed that but little more was wanting to complete the wreck this man had wantonly made of physical health and mental power.

He paced the floor of his apartment the greater part of the night, locking the doors against all intruders, and stubbornly refusing to permit his cousin to remain near him. He vaguely felt that Crimin exerted over him some strange power which, in his presence, he could not resist, and resolute to carry out the vindictive purpose he had matured in his own mind, he banished the man he believed to be acting in the interest of his wife.

Toward morning he threw himself upon the bed, and slept heavily for many hours, utterly worn out with the unusual amount of exercise he had taken.

When breakfast was ready to be served, his own servant ventured to knock at his door, but as no answer was returned, he went in search of Crimin, to know if he thought it advisable to use other means to arouse his master.

"Let him sleep, by all means, John," was the indifferent reply, "It is the best thing he can do in his present state."

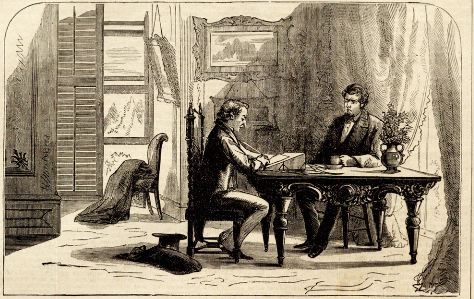
"But—but, sir, marster may be dead. He looked uncommon bad las' night, an' he didn't cuss half as much as I'm used to, when I went in to ax ef he wanted me to help him undress hisself. He wouldn't take none o' his close off, an' he was trampin' 'roun' in thar hours an' hours."

"Yes; I heard him, for I could not sleep much myself. If you'll listen at the window now, you'll hear him snoring loud enough to wake any mortal creature except a drunken man. He is not going to die yet, so you need not be afraid to leave him to take his nap out. Tell the cook to send up my breakfast, and keep something nice and hot for her master when he wakes."

John vanished, glad to be relieved of the responsibility of arousing the sleeper, and so long continued were Layton's slumbers, that Crimin himself began to fear that he had taken something to prolong them till they ended in that last sleep which knows no awakening.

At eleven o'clock Mr. Barton, the lawyer, arrived. He was a small, timid looking man, with deep-set eyes of a pale blue color, sandy hair and beard, and a nervous indecision of manner, which was increased this morning by the prospect of an interview with Mr. Layton.

Barton was a competent lawyer, and attended scrupulously to the business placed in his hands, but his practice was not large, and the employment given him by Layton was more lucrative than that of any other client, for his belligerent propensities brought him into ever-recurring difficulties with his neighbors, and Barton's help was always needed to extricate him from them.



THE MAKING OF THE WILL.

Yet the little man had a nervous dread of his blustering client, and his heart sank within him when he was summoned to Layton, to prepare the last will and testament of its master under such untoward circumstances.

It had already become widely known that Mrs. Layton had taken her child and gone, whither no one could exactly make out; but that she had left her husband, and refused to return to live with him, was an accepted fact. Now Mr. Barton cherished a great admiration for Alice, and it made his little heart grow faint within him when he felt the conviction in it that he was summoned to Layton to aid her husband in consummating some great wrong against her.

Crimin met him with the information that his client was still sleeping, and he would have gone away under the pretext of pressing business elsewhere; but just as he was preparing to do so, the door of Layton's room opened, and he walked into the hall where the two men were standing, and said, with a frown:

"I hope you were not thinking of going away again without seeing me, Barton, when I had written to you myself to be on hand to-day. I have a use for you, and no other business is to take you away till mine is finished. It's lunch time, or near it, and I have overslept myself confoundedly. It don't matter though. Only half the day is gone, and you can finish up what I want done before nightfall."

"Certainly, certainly, Mr. Layton. I am always at your service, you know," said the little man nervously. "I—I—only thought I would ride over to the Oakridge place while you were sleeping, and come back this way later in the day."

"So-o, you expect to kill two birds with one stone when you are summoned by *me*, do you?" asked Layton, with a sneer. "When I send for those I employ and pay liberally, I expect them to put aside other people's affairs, and attend only to mine. It is very well for you, Mr. Barton, that you did not go to Oakridge, for if I had not found you here when I was ready for you, I should have employed another man to look after my business."

"Really, Mr. Layton, this is assuming a strange tone to me; but I can overlook it in consideration of—of—the—the trouble you are in, and which I suppose you wish to consult me about."

"*I* am in no trouble," thundered Layton, his leaden face flushing slightly. "I am as free as a butterfly this morning, and as happy as the bird singing on yonder bough. I've got rid of the millstone I hung around my neck in the shape of a wife, and she was considerate enough to take her brat with her. I'm glad she's gone; but I mean to punish her all the same for daring to take me at my word when I ordered her to leave my house, and I've sent for you to help me do it."

The timid little man shrank within himself, and he almost shivered at the prospect of the ordeal before him, but he managed to say:

"I—of course I must do whatever you wish, Mr. Layton; but will it not be well that you should wait a few days? You are excited now, and naturally angry; I should prefer writing so important a document as a will when you are in a calmer frame of mind."

"I sent for you, sir, to do me a service, not to offer your advice as to when it should be done," said Layton, in a freezing tone. "I am the best judge of my own affairs. The will shall be made to-day, while I have sense and judgment to see that it is worded without a quibble that the law can take hold of. When that is off my mind, I shall give myself up to the fates, or the furies, for I know that I am a doomed man, and yonder stands the Mephistopheles who would not allow me to go back to sense and soberness, even if I were inclined to do so."

He pointed mockingly at Crimin, whose sallow face flushed, and he hastily said:

"Really, Ned, if you become so personal, I shall be forced to follow the example of your wife, and leave you to your own devices. Then the world could judge whether you wish to reform or not. I—"

"There—there, that will do," broke in Layton. "It is too late now, and I can't do without you, as you know well enough, or you would never hint at going away. The story is almost told, the web nearly spun, and the weird sisters are sharpening their scissors to clip the threads. So be it. I have lived a merry life, if it is to be a brief one, and after to-day I will give myself up to such mad revelry as will make Bacchus himself laugh and dance in sympathy with his wildest follower. Ha, ha!"

The laugh that rang out was so forced, so hollow, so evidently the offspring of reckless despair, that even Crimin shuddered, and asked himself if this was indeed his work. The little lawyer felt as if the blood in his veins were chilling into ice, and he shrank more than ever from the formidable task that lay before him when lunch was over.

Layton called loudly for a servant, and sent orders to have strong black coffee prepared and sent to the library as hot as it was possible to drink it, when he was ready to call for it.

"I must have something to stimulate me," he said, "and with what I have in hand coffee will be the safest tipple. I must have one joram though, to tune up my nerves and keep me up to the mark. Come into the dining-room, Barton, and fortify your courage by taking a sip at the elixir of life before that fellow brings in more mundane refreshments."

"Thanks—I believe I will," replied Barton, who felt as if something was necessary to sustain him through the ordeal that awaited him; he accepted a very modest portion of brandy and water, and was surprised to see his host nearly fill his goblet, and after adding a very small quantity of water, drink it off without strangling. Layton burst into a laugh when he saw Barton's amazed face, and said:

"That is nothing; you ought to be present when Crimin and I are going it strong. Strong waters don't hurt him, curse him! but they are doing for me fast enough."

"Then why, in Heaven's name, don't you draw off and leave the temptation behind you? You are not yet so far gone but you could regain all that you have lost, and—"

"Ta-ta, ta-ta! Don't be spooney, little man. What's the use? Time's past—handwriting is on the wall, and *I* can't evade the decree of fate any more than Belshazzar could. I don't wish to, either; I've made a mess of my life, and what is left of it isn't worth enough to make me anxious to preserve it. Since I am to die, I will drown, as the brother of an English king did, in a sea of wine."

"But, Mr. Layton, will you permit me to—"

"To preach a sermon on my enormities?" broke in Layton. "No, I won't. I know beforehand all that you can say on *that* subject, and I am not going to be bored with such cant as all the good people are addicted to. There is the lunch bell; let us sit down, and, John, go and tell Mr. Crimin we are waiting for him."

A message came back a few moments later that Mr. Crimin declined taking lunch, and Layton growled out that he supposed his cousin was offended at not being asked to drink with them.

But Crimin had scarcely noticed the omission, so full was his mind of a plan to overhear what passed between Layton and his legal adviser. As soon as they were seated at the table, he betook himself to the library, and made such arrangements as would facilitate the eavesdropping he intended to practice.

The library table was drawn up near a large window which filled in nearly the whole of the end wall, and near it, in the side wall, was a window of ordinary size, with a deep recess in front of it draped with a heavy curtain. This he let fall to the floor, after lifting the window a few inches, and unbolting the shutter. One leaf he threw open and fastened back, the piazza roof and clustering shrubs on that side of the house preventing any glare from without from penetrating the curtain.

He then placed a couple of chairs in such a position that the faces of the two men would be turned toward the side window, enabling him to hear more distinctly what passed between them. Having accomplished his arrangements, he mounted his horse and rode away, leaving a message to the effect that he would not be back till after sunset.

"A good riddance!" muttered Layton, when he heard that his cousin was gone. "Shall we proceed to business now, Mr. Barton, or would you prefer a smoke first?"

"Oh, a cigar by all means," replied the little man eagerly, glad to defer the evil hour by every means in his power, though he really cared very little for smoking.

Layton scowled, for he understood the device, and half an hour was consumed in walking to and fro on the gallery while they enjoyed their Havanas. When there was no further pretext for delay, Mr. Barton followed his host to the library, and they both sat down on the chairs as Crimin had placed them. The coffee, strong, black, and boiling hot, was brought in a silver pot with a lamp beneath it, and two small egg-shaped cups placed beside it on the waiter.

The door was closed on the servant and locked, and the one opening on the drawing-room was also examined, but no heed was given to the window Crimin had so carefully prepared for his own use. Barton declined partaking of the coffee, and at intervals Layton sipped it throughout the whole sitting.

When everything was at last arranged to his entire satisfaction, Layton set down his cup, and looking sternly into the face that regarded him with a scared and doubtful expression, said:

"My purpose is as cruel as the grave, and as relentless as fate itself. You are to do what I bid you, and to offer no remonstrance. I intend to repay in my own way my runaway wife for eloping from me, and no one—*no one*, mark me, shall turn me from my purpose. I wish such a will made as will cut her off from all participation in my property for many years to come, either her or her child, save the sum of five hundred dollars annually to be paid over to them."

"But—but, according to common law, Mr. Layton, your wife is entitled to one-third of your estate. You can make no will that will take that from her, if she chooses to contend for her rights."

"This woman will not contend, for she is too proud and too sensitive to have such a will as I am going to make brought before the courts, and its singular provisions bruited over the whole land, as they would certainly be when they became known."

"Good God! Mr. Layton, what do you intend to do then?" asked Barton, becoming white and limp beneath the lurid glare of the inflamed eyes bent fiercely upon him.

"I am going to do an act of *justice*, sir, on a woman who has robbed me of my daughter, and in so doing robbed *her* of her inheritance," thundered Layton, striking his hand so violently on the table that one of the pearly cups fell over and broke in pieces.

He looked at the fragments savagely, and went on:

"If I could crush her as easily as I have destroyed that thing, I would do it without remorse. She has made me the talk and byword of the county; I can never hold up my head again after it is known that Layton of Layton has been deserted, baffled by his own wife. There is nothing left for me now but to drink myself into the grave as speedily as may be."

He dropped his face on his hands, and there was a long silence, for the lawyer was too much appalled by his violence to utter a word of remonstrance.

At length Layton looked up and, with sudden calmness, said:

"I spoke of disinheriting my child, but I do not mean to do that; I only intend to bequeath my property to her on such conditions as will compel her mother to part from her—to hide her where James Crimin cannot find her, for her life will be the only bar to his succession to my estate."

"But, Mr. Layton, the child is your own," gasped Barton. "How can you have the heart to place her in a position you seem yourself to think will be one of extreme danger to her?"

"I have no heart, but I have nerve enough to carry out the plan I have devised to punish Alice where she is most vulnerable. Stop trembling, man, and draw up the paper to you: it is time to commence the exercise of your legal skill, and be sure if there is a flaw in the document I shall detect it. I have studied law myself, though I have never practiced it. Write down the usual formula, and then I will tell you on what terms I bequeath my fortune to the child."

With nervous fingers Barton obeyed, and read over what he had written.

"That is well; and now comes the gist of the matter. To my daughter, Lucia Layton, I give my undivided estate, provided she lives to attain the age of eighteen years. If she dies *after* her majority, without children of her own to inherit, the whole property shall go to certain charities I shall hereafter indicate. If she dies *before* completing her eighteenth year, my entire fortune goes to my cousin, James Crimin."

The pen dropped from the hand of the lawyer, and he gaspingly said:

"O lord! O lord! you are offering a bribe of half a million to your cousin to put your own child out of the way, that he may get possession of this magnificent estate. Have you unbounded confidence in him as a good man, that you do such an unheard of thing as this?"

Layton serenely replied:

"On the contrary, I know him to be a bad and unscrupulous man. That is why I place such power in his hands. Alice knows him as well as I do, and she will be forced to put her child from her, or live in mortal terror of her safety. That is my revenge for her desertion, and I will carry it out to the bitter end."

"But, Mr. Layton, have you no love for little Lucia yourself? Suppose that she perishes through your own act? Oh, sir, think—think what danger to her you may be evoking. I do not know that your cousin would be tempted to such wickedness, but you must see yourself that the inducement offered is very, very great to a man of his habits."

"I intend it to be great. I believe that he would put aside such an obstacle as a baby's life with as much coolness as he would drown an obnoxious kitten; but the mother will find means to save her daughter. To do this, she must put her away from herself, for with *her*, Lucia would never be safe. That is my object in making such a will. Alice took Lucia away from me: she shall not dare to retain her herself; so we are quits."

He poured out another cup of coffee for himself, and sipped it as coolly as if he had not condemned his child to exile from the only heart that truly cherished her—had not given her over to such danger as would menace all her young life, and probably cause it to end by violence.

Barton sat staring at him in helpless silence, uncertain if he could really have heard rightly. Layton caught the expression of his face, and angrily asked:

"Why do you stare at me so? Do you think I am a monster? Are you mentally comparing me to a Nero? It does not matter to me what your thoughts are, so that you proceed at once to put my wishes into proper form. My will is an eccentric one, but I will pay you an eccentric price for drawing it up according to my instructions. Make all its provisions secure, and I will give you a thousand dollars before you leave this room."

The sum offered was a large one to the needy lawyer, and he hesitatingly said:

"If your mind is really made up to—to have this thing done, I may as well be paid for it as another. Can nothing induce you to—"

"Nothing," interrupted Layton. "My mind is irrevocably made up, and has been for many hours past. Words cannot influence me in any way, so all you have to do is to complete your work as soon as possible."

After this, Barton applied himself to his task, and nothing was heard in the silent room but the scraping of his pen over the paper, and an occasional impatient movement on the part of Layton.

Crimin had left his horse fastened to a tree in the forest, and came back on foot, approaching the house through the thick shrubberies, and no one had seen him when he stationed himself at the window. He heard all that passed within, and even he grew pale as he heard the vindictive purpose of his cousin set forth in words.

He softly muttered to himself:

"When the time comes, as come it will, to ask Alice to become my wife, if she refuses, I shall be tempted to justify your bad opinion of me, Ned Layton. *You* shall not stand in my way much longer, and having put you under the sod, it will be easy enough to deal with the fragile little creature that will then stand between me and this fair inheritance."

The will was at last finished and read aloud to Layton. He examined it carefully himself, and then said:

"When my cousin comes back I will send for the overseer, and they can witness my signature. Then you can take it away with you and keep it in a safe place till it is wanted."

Crimin had heard all he wished, and he softly departed. The sun was sinking low in the horizon, and half an hour later he rode up to the front door, and came in looking as calm as usual.

The overseer was summoned, the signature witnessed, the will sealed and labelled and Barton rode away with a heavy fee, but a much heavier heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHILLING RECEPTION.

Even the sea seemed unpropitious to the unfortunate Alice, for after the dangerous harbor of Charleston was left behind, a violent storm arose, and raged for many hours: the steamship became unmanageable, and drifted at the mercy of the waves. When all hope was nearly abandoned, the wind lulled and successful efforts were made to run into Hampton roads, and go on to Portsmouth for such repairs as were necessary.

Much as Mrs. Layton had suffered in her voyage, it was fortunate for her that the ship could not go on her way to Baltimore, as by this detention she was saved from the danger that awaited her there through the malice of her husband.

The captain of the steamer, a frank, warm-hearted sailor, had taken a deep interest in his passenger and her child, and from her extreme depression he made a keen guess at the truth. He knew something of Layton and his cousin, of their reckless dissipation, and could consequently imagine the life from which poor Alice was making an effort to escape.

Finding that his vessel would be detained several days, he advised his fair passenger to accept the protection of an elderly gentleman who offered to take charge of her, and go on by rail. As there was a station on her father's land not more than a mile distant from his house, Mrs. Layton gladly assented to this arrangement. The captain himself saw her safely on the train, and at sunset, on a lovely day in April, she found herself safe on the platform of the station, from which she could see the paternal roof rising above the trees in the distance.

With a grateful heart Alice clasped her child to her breast, and returned thanks to Heaven for bringing them all in safety so near a haven of refuge; and Cassy was nearly wild with delight at finding herself so near her own home, and the relatives she had left behind her when she went with her young mistress to South Carolina.

The depot master glanced dubiously at the party, and after a few moments inquired of Cassy, in a low tone:

"An't that lady there the daughter of the old man up yonder?" pointing toward Snowden in a mysterious manner. "I've seen her many a time when she was a slip of a girl, and I don't think I'm mistaken."

"No, sir, you an't. My mistis is Miss Alice Snowden what was, and she's Mrs. Layton now."

"Humph! thought I couldn't be mistaken. They telegraphed to her then about the old gentleman, and she's come on to see him before the end comes."

Cassy's eyes widened with alarm, and she anxiously inquired:

"Has anything happened to my ole marster? My mistis an't heard nothin'; she's had trouble herself, poor thing! an' she's just come home for comfort."

"'Tan't much she'll get there then, I'm feared. The old man has had a stroke—paralyzed, you know; but they say he's a little better, and won't make a die of it this time."

Though the man spoke in a guarded tone, Alice caught the sense of his words, and with a scared face turned to him.

"What is that about my father, Mr. Jones? Is he dangerously ill?"

"Oh, Mrs. Layton, I did not intend you to hear what I said. Mr. Snowden is not in danger now, I have been told, though you will find him in bed, and the doctor going to see him. This is your child, I suppose? What a pretty little creature she is, to be sure."

"How long has my father been ill?" she abruptly asked, not heeding the compliment to her child.

"It's a week to-day since he was struck with paralysis. At first the doctors thought he was a bad case, but he's improving, though they say he'll never be the same man he was before. But I beg your pardon—I forgot who I am talking to."

Alice had grown very pale, but she controlled herself, and said quietly:

"It is better that I should know this before seeing him. I will walk on to Snowden; no one knows that I am coming, and therefore the carriage was not sent to meet me. I will send for my luggage after I get to the house, Mr. Jones."

With some hesitation, Jones said:

"There's two big trunks here a'ready, ma'am, that came by the express, with your name on 'em. I sent word to Mrs. Snowden, but they've been in such a fluster up there that no notice was taken of the message."

Alice flushed slightly; such neglect would not have been permitted had her father been in a condition to give orders, and she knew that she would now be made to feel that her presence was less welcome than ever to her step-mother. Her lips trembled as she said:

"Very well, Mr. Jones; I will send for them with the others. Good-afternoon. Come, Cassy."

The depot master looked after her, and muttered:

"Poor thing! I'm feared something's gone wrong with her, and it's poor comfort she'll get from that white snow woman that rules her father's house. *She*'s a clinker, *she* is, and no mistake."

After a few hundred yards, the road turned into a stretch of woodland, and wound over hill and hollow in picturesque curves. A narrow creek fringed with willows rippled over its rocky bed, over which a fanciful bridge was thrown. Ascending a long hill beyond it, they came upon a wide stretch of moorland on which sheep were grazing. At the farthest edge of this gleamed the white palings which inclosed the lawn that lay in front of Snowden.

The house itself was embowered among trees and shrubbery, and only glimpses of its gray walls and stately entrance could be obtained through the long avenue of elms through which it was approached.

Every nook and bosky dell was familiar to Alice, and heavy as her heart was, it bounded more than once with glad recognition of the places in which she had played in childhood.

Lucia's arm was nearly well, though her hand was still useless to her, and she sprang in before her nurse, gathering the wild flowers that bloomed beside the road, declaring that she was going to make a "totay for dampa."

Mr. Snowden had never seen the child, for Alice had never been taken back to her early home since her marriage, and she now thought with a swelling heart that she would find but a cold welcome beneath its roof, much as she needed sympathy and loving care.

She went around to a side gate opening on a pathway through the shrubbery, and followed by Cassy, who had now taken the child in her arms, drew near the house.

It wore that indescribable air of desolation and stillness which falls on a house in which there is sickness almost unto death. Everything around was in scrupulous order; no dead leaves were allowed to cumber the ground, no aspiring shrub to invade the pathways: all was trim and neat as Alice always remembered it since the place passed under the supervision of her step-mother.

Mrs. Snowden was the ruling spirit of that house, for the quiet and rather passive man she had married had gradually sunk into a mere cipher beneath her active sway. She it was who had arranged the marriage of Alice, and made the child she then was believe that a brilliant position and plenty of money were all a woman needs to complete her happiness.

As Alice ascended the steps leading to the lofty portico in front of the house, a small, weather-beaten man, with a red face and brisk manner, came bustling out. He stopped, and stared at her a moment, and then, with a hearty shake of her hand, exclaimed:

"Bless my soul! where on the earth did you spring from? How did you hear, child? I wanted a letter or a telegram sent to you, but Mrs. Snowden said it was better to wait till something was decided. If anything fatal happened, you couldn't get here in time, and if it didn't, you could be written to when the danger was passed. I was going to write to you myself to-night, to tell you that your father will get over this attack; but it is all the better that you are here to be told in person."

He talked fast and excitedly, and when he paused for breath, Alice said, with a faint smile:

"Thank you for relieving my fears concerning my father, Dr. Preston. I did not know he was ill till I heard it at the depot. How I came to be here at this time you will know before long, and if others blame me for the course I have taken, I hope that *you* will stand my friend for the sake of old times. I can explain nothing now, but as one of my best friends, you shall, in time, know all."

"Why, God bless my soul! you don't mean— There, child, I'll wait; I am not going to ask you any questions now. And this little lady is your child? as pretty as a rose in June, I do declare. How do you do, Cassy? You are looking as bright as a pewter button, and glad enough to get back to the old place, I dare swear."

"'Deed I is, Doctor, an' that's the truth."

The sound of voices brought to the door a small, fair woman, with delicate features, pale gray eyes with a slight amber tinge in them, thin lips, and light auburn hair, almost sandy in its hue. Her face was white, hard, and cold, and her dress the perfection of neatness; the crimped frills at her throat and wrists looked as precise and unrumpled as if they had been just put on, yet she had worn them all day in the invalid's room. The expression that came into Mrs. Snowden's face, for she it was, when she saw Alice, was one of unmistakable annoyance, though there did not seem to be surprise mingled with it. With the quiet coolness which appeared to be characteristic, she came forward, took the hand of her step-daughter, and lightly touched her lips to her forehead. In a soft falsetto voice, she said:

"This is a sad time to make your first visit to your old home, Alice. Where is Mr. Layton? I suppose he is with you, of course."

"He is not with me," said Alice, panting slightly, for her heart sunk down, down like lead at this cold greeting. "No," she went on with a sort of desperation, "Mr. Layton is not with me, nor ever likely to claim me again. I have run away from him."

The worst was out now, and she looked from one face to the other to see how this abrupt announcement was received. Dr. Preston's was full of compassion, but that of her step-mother contracted into a stern expression, and her singular eyes emitted a fiery gleam as she grimly said:

"You were always impulsive and hard to deal with, Alice, and now I suppose you have been guilty of a disgraceful escapade in a moment of pique against your husband. But this is no time nor place to discuss your affairs. Come in, and at a later hour I will hear what excuses you can bring forward for deserting your home, and giving up the brilliant position I took such pains to secure for you."

Before obeying this mandate, uttered as if her step-daughter was still under her tutelage, Alice seized the hand of Dr. Preston, and holding it tight between both her own, excitedly said:

"*You* will believe in me, dear Doctor? You know that I would never have left my husband if it had been possible for me to live with him. Tell me you believe that, and I shall not care much for *her*."

Mrs. Snowden had gone into the house again without noticing either the child or nurse, and she was now in the shadow of the hall, awaiting her unwelcome guest. Dr. Preston hastily replied to the impassioned appeal of Alice:

"I know you could not do anything wrong, Alice, for you were the most conscientious of children, and the gentlest of maidens. I will stand by you, my dear; but don't make an enemy of Mrs. Snowden. Keep fair with her if you can. And now good-bye, and God bless you."

"Stop one moment, and tell me if I can see my father at once? Will my presence excite him too much?"

"It will be an inexpressible comfort to him, for he was wishing that you were here only a little while ago. But you must be careful about telling him of your troubles; he has enough of his own just now. I must go now, but I will have a good talk with you to-morrow."

He hastened away, and Alice, followed by Cassy, entered the wide hall, its polished walls gleaming white and cold as marble, and the furniture arranged with such precision as showed the Argus eyes of its mistress. Mrs. Snowden led the way into her usual sitting-room, which had the same air of chilly order which seemed to be the atmosphere of the house. Her work-stand stood on one side of the fireplace, her writing desk on the other, but both were scrupulously neat, and every chair was ranged with mathematical precision against the walls.

Alice hastily said:

"If you please, mamma, I should like to go to my room at once, and after I have arranged my dress a little, I wish to go in to father. I shall be glad if you will break to him the news of my arrival."

"All in good time, Alice. I will ring for a servant to ascertain if your room is prepared. I ordered it to be done when I heard of the trunks that had been sent on before you. There is some confusion on account of your father's illness; even in the best regulated families it cannot be avoided at such times, and your baggage has not yet been sent for."

The servant came, gave a delighted nod to her master's daughter, but did not venture beyond that in the presence of Mrs. Snowden. She silently received her orders, and as she was turning away, that lady said:

"Cassy may as well go with you. How do, Cas? I have had no time to think of you before. And this is your little girl of course, Alice. She is not much like you; is she always as quiet as this?"

"She is far from quiet usually; but now she is tired with running on before us as we came over, and I should not wonder if she is half frozen," said Alice cynically. "I am sure I feel as if I am chilled to the heart."

Her step-mother flashed a single glance out of her cat-like eyes, which showed that she understood the meaning of her words, but she quietly said to the departing servant:

"Have a fire made in Mrs. Layton's room, Katy, and tell Dick to bring some kindling in here."

Then turning to Alice, she added in her false voice:

"Toward evening it becomes chilly enough to make a small fire agreeable at this season, although the days are so bright and beautiful."

"I hardly think material warmth will relieve the chilliness of which I complain," replied Alice dryly.

A dull red glow came into Mrs. Snowden's cheeks, but with the same unruffled manner she said:

"You were always hard of comprehension, Alice, and I find that you have not improved in that respect. But we will let that pass for the present. Tell me, if you please, in as few words as possible, what has induced you to take so disgraceful a step as flight from your husband's house must be considered?"

"I left him because neither my own life nor that of my child was safe beneath his roof. That is concise enough, I hope, and very much to the point."

"So it is; but you have to prove to me that you were actually in danger. You see, women like you take such wild fancies in their heads that they cannot be trusted to judge of what is an actual grievance or an imaginary one. You gained every material advantage in your union with Edward Layton, and you should have borne with his—his eccentricities in a more forgiving spirit."

Alice listened with curling lip and flashing eyes. All that was belligerent in her nature Mrs. Snowden had never failed to arouse when she undertook to advise her, or rather to censure her, for all that departed from her own conventional standard was unsparingly condemned. She lifted her head proudly, and with something of scorn in her voice, said:

"It is useless for me to tell you of the indignities I have borne at Mr. Layton's hands, for you would find excuses for *him*, and blame *me*. Let it suffice that I have left him, *never* to return to him; with the aid of a good friend I escaped from his power with my child. He would have torn her from me, but I evaded him, and I am *here* to claim the protection of my father for her and for myself."

There was something like alarm in the tones of Mrs. Snowden as she asked:

"Is there any danger that Mr. Layton will follow you here, and make a violent scene? If he does, it will kill your father. He is in a very critical condition, and any shock may be fatal to him."

"If he could remain sober long enough to put any purpose into effect, he might come," said Alice recklessly. "As it is, James Crimin will keep him so constantly under the influence of drink that there is little danger of his appearance here."

"An inebriate! Good heavens!" raising her hands in holy horror; but after an instant she went on: "That is certainly a most disgusting vice, but there are hundreds, thousands of women in this land who put up with the vagaries of an intoxicated husband, and use every means that self-respect suggests to screen his weakness from the knowledge of the outside world. *Your* course seems to have been the very reverse of that."

"If you call it a vagary to throw my child to the earth at the risk of killing or crippling her, to fire his pistol at my head with the purpose of destroying me, then you give very soft names to very hard and dreadful facts, Mrs. Snowden. I believe I have said enough now, and if you please, I will go to my own room and get ready to see my father."

Mrs. Snowden looked a little appalled at this statement, but after a pause, she said:

"It is all very dreadful and very exasperating that you must come back on your father just at this crisis with such a story of wrong and ruin. Of course Mr. Layton will assert that you have left him without sufficient cause, and refuse to allow you a support unless you sue him for alimony."

"I shall not do that," said Alice curtly. "I would sooner labor for my daily bread than have my wretched married life dragged into the courts, and given to the world to comment on. I am not entirely destitute of means, and in this house I feel as if I have the right to remain, at least as long as my father lives."

A cloud passed over Mrs. Snowden's face, and with icy coldness, she said:

"Of course this is your natural refuge; but it will be a bitter mortification to both your father and myself to have to tell our friends that the brilliant marriage you made has turned out so badly. However blameless you may think yourself, the world will censure you, as it always does a woman who separates from her husband."

"Yes; *men* take sides with their own sex, and defend the husband; *women* attack their unfortunate sister, and tear her to shreds with a gusto that is really inexplicable," said Alice, with extreme bitterness. "'Man's inhumanity to man' has passed into a proverb. I wonder where words strong enough to express it could be found, to set forth how merciless a narrow-minded woman can be to another woman, when she violates what are considered the conventional proprieties. Thank Heaven! there are *some* noble women in the world who can look at both sides, and hold an impartial balance between even a brutal husband and a runaway wife."

"Here you are flying off at a tangent in your old way, Alice, and saying the most dreadful things. If your husband is a brute, it hardly becomes you to say it. I confess that *I* belong to the narrow-minded clique among my sex who think that a woman must keep her marriage vow, let what will come of it. I cannot think that you had any real danger to apprehend from a gentleman born and bred, as Mr. Layton was. He may have tried to intimidate you, but that he meant really to harm you or Lucia I decline to believe."

"Of course you take sides against me; I expected nothing better when I came hither; but my father will hardly be willing to allow me to subject myself again to the dangers I have so narrowly escaped. May I ask to what crisis you referred just now? Has anything happened to annoy papa? Was his illness caused by hearing of some misfortune?"

Mrs. Snowden shivered as with a sudden chill, and covered her face with her hands. Alice waited in painful solicitude several moments, and then said:

"I see that something painful *has* happened; it is my right to know it, and I again ask to be enlightened as to the cause of his seizure."

The emotion of Mrs. Snowden passed away as soon as it had appeared, but her voice was husky as she said:

"You must know it, and I may as well tell you as another. Arthur has left college without permission. He has drawn large sums of money on your father's account, and gambled them away, leaving heavy debts behind him to be paid by Mr. Snowden. The last we heard of him he had gone to Norfolk, and shipped himself as a common sailor on a vessel bound for China. The news was communicated to your father in a most abrupt manner, and—and—he fell from his chair in a fit."

Alice sat pale and breathless, listening to this statement from the lips of the mother of the lad who had been guilty of such turpitude. Arthur was but sixteen years old, and she remembered him as the pride and darling of her father's heart. His abilities were good, his temper vivacious, and when thwarted, very unruly: strict discipline might have saved him from yielding to temptation, but it had never been applied to him. He was sent to college at fifteen with an ample allowance, and this was the disgraceful end of all the hopes centred in him. Alice felt sympathy for the pale mother, hard as she had been with her; she softly said:

"I am sorry for all of us who have to bear this trouble, but most sorry for you, because you are his mother. Poor papa! he loved him so, no wonder that he could not bear it."

Mrs. Snowden's yellow eyes suddenly flamed, and she clenched her hands as she said:

"You need not waste your sympathy on *me*. I have given him up—disowned him as completely as if no drop of my blood flows in his veins. He is not like me—he is a Snowden; and to your father's injudicious indulgence all his evil deeds may be traced. He is the heaviest sufferer, for his health is irretrievably ruined, and the money he will have to replace will impoverish us for years to come."

Alice regarded her with dilating eyes. That a mother could speak so harshly of her only son was incomprehensible to her. After a pause she said:

"The Snowdens have been looked on as an honorable and high-toned race. If Arthur is like them, he may be saved yet. I am glad that papa will save my brother's honor, even if the sacrifice of money is necessary to accomplish it."

"You talk of money as if it was to be picked up anywhere; you know nothing of its value. I have other children to care for. I wished to send the girls to boarding-school, but now they must keep on with Mrs. Munson's governess. I wonder why they are so late this evening. I will show you your room, and then inquire about them."

Alice arose at once, and together they went out.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

"A GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE."

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

The winter sunshine, broken as it were into a cascade of scintillating rays by a stand of pink-flowered azaleas and glossy-leaved camellias, streamed cheerily into the room where Elaine Aubrey sat—a room all pink and silver, with tinted walls and carpet shaded like a damask rose. And Elaine herself, gold-haired and azure-eyed, looked like a human flower as she sat there in a white cashmere wrapper tasselled with silver, and edged with a dainty foam of swan's-down; while directly opposite, at the little round table, as if *posed* for the precise purpose of a contrast, sat Diana Effyngham, a dark-eyed, gipsy-like brunette, in black velvet and sables.

Into this brilliant and perfumed bower entered Mrs. Beckford, like a sober brown thrush who has found her way by mistake into a humming-bird's nest.

"At lunch, eh?" said Mrs. Beckford. "Well, I won't intrude."

"Oh, pray don't go away!" cried Elaine, starting up, all sunny hospitality. "Diana, this is Aunt Alice—his Aunt Alice," with a laugh and a blush. "Sit down; do, please, and let me give you a glass of wine and a slice of this cold tongue."

"Champagne?" said Mrs. Beckford a little doubtfully. "None for me, thanks."

"Not like champagne!" cried Elaine, opening wide her sea-blue eyes. "Why, I am so fond of it."

And she held the glass of sparkling, beaded amber to her lips and drank half its contents at a draught.

"Tastes differ," said Mrs. Beckford dryly. "For my part, I prefer a glass of ice-water. And, Elaine, do you drink champagne every day?"

"Always," said Elaine. "The doctor told papa that I needed some stimulants to tone up my system."

"It is a bad habit to cultivate," said Mrs. Beckford soberly.

"O, Aunty, every one drinks champagne," said Elaine, with a slightly injured air. "It isn't like port and sherry, and those horrid heavy, vulgar drinks; is it, Di.?"

"Does Hugh approve of it?"

"Hugh!" said Elaine, with a saucy toss of her pretty head. "Why, Hugh was with me at Mrs. Spicer's party last night, where we did nothing but waltz and cool off with iced champagne, from midnight until three o'clock. Dear Aunt Alice, you'll pardon me, I know; but you are *so* old-fashioned!"

"But, Elaine," urged the old lady, "don't you think a cup of tea would do you just as much good?"

"To be sure not," Elaine answered, a little annoyed. "I feel so languid—so *gone*, without my glass of wine at lunch."

"Your two or three glasses, you mean, Elaine," said Miss Effyngham, a little mischievously.

"Well," said Mrs. Beckford, "for my part, I don't pretend to comprehend the freaks of you fashionable young ladies. I suppose you'll be smoking and playing billiards yet."

Diana Effyngham glanced across the table at her friend, and burst out laughing. Elaine colored.

"I *did* smoke a cigarette yesterday," she confessed, "just for fun."

"And she and I had a match game of billiards with Guy Clover and Maurice Delford," added Diana Effyngham defiantly.

"What made you tell her that, Di.?" reproachfully questioned Elaine, after Mrs. Bickford had gone.

"Oh, I like to make the old lady stare," said Diana roguishly. "She is so unsophisticated. And you know yourself it is true, Elaine."

"The truth is not to be spoken at all times," said Elaine sententiously. "And she is Hugh Robertson's aunt."

"Hugh's aunt, indeed!" said Diana, with a contemptuous toss of her head. "Oh, the slaves that you engaged girls are! *I*, for one, wouldn't sell my freedom for a diamond solitaire ring."

Hugh Robertson, a rising young luminary in the legal firmament, sat in his law office on lower Broadway as Aunt Alice came in looking weary and dispirited. He sprang up to offer her a chair.

"Well, Aunty, you have been shopping; I can read it in your visage."

"You read the wrong tale," said Aunt Alice, half smiling. "I have been to see Elaine."

"Well?"

"And I found her and that bosom-friend of hers, Miss Effyngham, lunching off cold tongue, game pie, and champagne. Hugh, I may be very old-style in my tastes and fancies, and I dare say I am, but I do not like to see a young lady drinking wine with such evident relish."

Hugh bit the end of his pen with a perplexed look.

"Nor do I say that you are wrong, Aunt Alice," said he. "But you know it is fashionable."

"So are a great many other follies," said Aunt Alice stoutly.

"And Elaine *is* delicate this winter," added Hugh, "and perhaps she needs the tonic. Aunt Alice, why do you look so grave? You surely do not think—"

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Bickford almost sadly, "I know I belong to a past generation, but still I cannot but dread the effects of such a habit on the nature of any one. I think you should warn Elaine."

"Aunt Alice!" echoed the young man, starting up with a red flush on his forehead. "Warn Elaine! Against—"

But here he stopped.

"There," said Aunt Alice, "I knew how it would be. I have offended you; but truth is truth, notwithstanding. And some day, perhaps, Hugh, you'll live to thank me for this plain speaking."

Time went on, and one day Hugh Robertson called unexpectedly.

"Is Miss Aubrey at home?"

"Yes, sir, she's at home," the parlor maid answered; "but she an't very well, I guess. She's on the drawin'-room sofy."

Mr. Robertson pushed open the door and entered.

"Elaine!"

She sat on the sofa, vaguely pushing her beautiful golden hair back from her face, with a blurred, misty look in her eyes, as if she did not recognize him. He sprang forward.

"Elaine, my darling! what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"O, it's you, Hugh?" she said slowly. "I didn't—I didn't think you would come, until—"

But here Diana Effyngham, with a scarlet face, interposed.

"Pray go away, Mr. Robertson," she said, as she pulled Elaine's sleeve warningly.

"But I insist on knowing what the matter is!" he cried.

"Colonel Aubrey had a dinner party to-night, that's all," said Diana, half angry, half laughing. "She'll be better soon. Oh, *do* go away! Elaine, hush!"

Robertson turned hesitatingly away, but the giggling whisper of one of the servants at the door unlocked the mystery at once.

"I never see a young lady drunk afore!"

He started as if a lash had ignominiously stung him. Drunk! His beautiful Elaine! his fair, spotless lily! For a *man* to be under the drugged influence of the fatal bowl seemed a venial offence, but a woman—and that woman Elaine Aubrey! O God! it was too horrible to think of.

He went straight to Mrs. Beckford's.

"It is as you foretold, Aunt Alice," he said, burying his face in his hands, as he flung himself on a sofa by her cheerful fire. "Elaine is—lost!"

Aunt Alice laid a cool, soothing hand on his forehead.

"Not lost, Hugh, let us hope. My boy, we must have faith, hope and charity for these poor erring lambs of the world's fold."

"Lost to me, Aunt Alice," he moaned. "I never can see her again. My pure star has fallen; my pearl has become tarnished."

Years have passed since then, and Elaine Aubrey, a hopeless inebriate, is secluded from the world in a private asylum. While Hugh Robertson keeps one of her long fair curls, tied with black crape, and worships the memory of his lost love as if she were in her grave.

And since that day, no drop of alcoholic Death has ever passed his lips.

HANDLING BOYS.

A LIFE SKETCH.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

Remembering my own boyhood, and the heart-hidden springs of action that were so easily touched, and which so impulsively answered, in those long-gone days, I am careful how I treat boys in this generation. "Boys are not what they used to be in my day!" says old Mudgeon; and a score of listeners shake their heads in sad and melancholy agreement. My good sirs, boys are as they always were—certainly no worse. The world of humanity is not going backward. The trouble is with you. In your boyhood days you possessed the keen appreciation of boyish sport without the power of ethical criticism. Now, you have lost the love of the sport, and are full to the brim with critical products. Then, you wondered why your parents should worry about you. Now, you know what it is to worry concerning the escapades of children. Honestly, Mr. Mudgeon, let you and me remember what we were in boyhood, and give the result to the benefit of the boys of to-day.

Of course there are exceptional cases. For such I am not writing. I write of boys as a class—of the boys whose song and whoop and merry laughter break the air of the country hill-side, and whose quick, bright eyes answer to the glances bestowed upon them.

A sketch of real life—a passage from the result of my own observation—will give the lesson.

Samuel Colby—we always called him "Uncle Sam.,"—and Nathan Gipp were well-to-do farmers, and they owned good orchards. Their houses were very near together, upon opposite sides of the road that divided their farms, and flanking this road also, upon opposite sides, were their orchards.

Nathan Gipp, a broad-shouldered, square-jawed, hard-featured man, of five and forty, was in his orchard picking up "wind-falls." It was early in September, and he had fall fruit that was ripe. While he thus worked the Dobbs boys came along—Jerry, and Tom, and Joe, and Jim. Hardy was with them.

"Hallo, Mr. Gipp! give us an apple, will you?" called Jerry, as the troop hauled up by the wall.

They had fish poles upon their shoulders, and were on their way to the pond for pickerel.

"I don't raise apples to give away," gruffly answered the farmer.

With a laugh and a whoop the boys tramped on, and very shortly they saw Mr. Colby in his orchard.

"How d'ye do, Uncle Sam.? Mayn't we have a few of your apples?"

"Certainly," replied Colby, with a genial greeting and a smile.—He was a tall, stalwart man, and had been one of the most successful school-teachers in that section.—"Certainly," he repeated. "Come over and help yourselves. Here are some high-top sweets; and there are some bell-flowers.—Going a fishing, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'll find the best fishing to-day above the upper mill. The water is very low, and you can make your way easily to the deep pools."

The boys thanked the good man, and tramped merrily off, munching their apples as they went.

Half an hour later a wayfaring man, with a bundle upon his shoulder, stopped at Gipp's wall, and asked if he might come over and get an apple.

"I've got apples to sell, but not to give away," answered Gipp.

The manner of the speech, as well as the substance thereof, was heartless and repelling, and the wayfarer turned away without speaking further. Presently he saw the other farmer, and he ventured the request of him.

"Certainly," responded Uncle Sam., cheerily.

And Mr. Colby selected for the traveller the best his orchard afforded.

"You are very kind, sir," said the stranger, gratefully.

"If to give of my abundance to those who have nothing be kindness, I can well afford to be kind. Whenever you pass this way you are welcome to such refreshment as my orchard can afford. In fact, I gain the chiefest of my comfort from the comfort and relief I can give to others."

The wayfarer chatted awhile with the good farmer, and then went his way.

That evening the Dobbs boys, on their return from the pond, left a fine mess of fish at Uncle Sam.'s door. The thought of doing this in payment for his apples never entered their heads. They did it out of pure good-will and love, to testify of their respect and esteem; and, moreover, catching the inspiration from the farmer himself, they felt how good it was, in their boyish way, to do good to others.

A few days after this Nathan Gipp came into his house in a towering passion.

"It's very strange," he said, with an oath, "that those rascals can't let my orchard alone. Only night before last old Tiger gave them a good biting. He tore the clothes half off from one of 'em; and from the spots of blood on the wall, he must have bitten some of 'em pretty badly; and yet, last night, they were in my orchard again; and they've done a deal of mischief, too. It's enough to make one go mad! Oh! I'd like to get my hands on one of 'em!"

And Nathan Gipp clenched his muscular hands ferociously.

"Do they trouble Sam. Colby's orchard?" asked his wife.

"No; and there's the mystery. Colby's got choicer fruit than I have, and his dog won't bite. They don't seem to go near his orchard at all."

Just then Gipp's son came running in with horror in his face.

"O, dad, old Tiger's dead. He's out in the shed, and he's dug a hole almost deep enough to bury himself in!"

Mr. Gipp went out, and when he saw the dead dog, with the signs of fierce convulsion, and the pools of froth, he knew that the brute had been poisoned. His anger and his anguish were without bounds.

"O! if I could only get my hands upon one of the villains!"

Later in the day Mrs. Gipp looked out at the window, and saw a boy in the orchard, and she called to her husband. Mr. Gipp seized a goad-stick and started out upon the run; and he caught little Zeke Hardy, a brother of Jim, under his bough-back sweeting.

"I was only picking up one to eat!" pleaded the boy.

"Yes!" hissed Gipp, white with rage. "I'll teach you! Take that! and that! You'll come again, won't you! Take that!—O! you young rascal! I'll make you howl worse 'n that! Now be off with you,—and let me catch you in my orchard again, and I'll whale you within an inch of your life!"

Sorely bruised and sobbing bitterly, little Zeke wended his way homeward, and when he arrived he found the Dobbs boys playing with his brother Jim. He told his story, and the wrath in those boyish breasts was equal to the wrath which had erst moved Nathan Gipp. They could not set a dog upon Mr. Gipp, nor could they whip him with a goad-stick. He had tempted them upon the war-path, and, like careful soldiers, they must fight according to their strength and opportunity.

Within a week a dozen of Gipp's choicest young fruit trees were entirely girdled; a rod of his stone-wall was torn down; and his harrow was hidden in the woods, and his best wagon hauled away and dumped into the mud-pond.

"Mr. Colby," cried the distressed man, to his neighbor, after recounting his grievances, "what can I do? You are a justice of the peace, and you can help me."

"What can I do for you?" asked Uncle Sam.

"Make out a writ for the arrest of them Dobbs boys, and Jim and Zeke Hardy."

"But, Mr. Gipp, can you prove anything against them?"

"I can try. I can frighten 'em, at any rate."

"My dear man," said Uncle Sam., in his quiet, persuasive way, "haven't you tried frightening about enough? Don't you see that in a game of that kind the boys have the advantage of you at every turn?"

"Would you defend these boys, Mr. Colby?"

"By no means."

"What d' you think of their pizenin' my dog?" asked Gipp, with towering indignation.

"We are to judge them as boys," returned Uncle Samuel, with a smile. "You bought the dog on purpose to bite; and he had bitten a number of people who were not intentionally trespassing. I think, Mr. Gipp, that you and I, when we were boys, would have been willing, at least, to furnish our share of the poison for a dog that had left the print of his fangs in our flesh."

"And the tearing down of my wall, and the girdling of my trees,—what do you think of that, sir?"

"I think it was very wrong; and yet, to speak frankly, I cannot much wonder at it."

"How!—not wonder?"

"No. You have beaten these boys, and you have refused them fruit which you could have spared as well as not."

"And you would have me *hire* these rascals to let me alone? I must *pay* them for doing right?"

"I don't look at it in that light, Mr. Gipp. We who are blessed with an abundance must regard ourselves to a certain extent as conservators of the public good. In a rural district like this there is a sort of common property in times of plenteous harvest, and those who give freely and frankly are best off in the end. Now facts are stern things. We have to deal with things as they are, and not with things as we would have them. What are the facts concerning your orchard and mine? I never refused man, woman, or child who asked me for fruit in passing my laden trees. I give because I love to give. It does me good. It is one of the comforts I purchase with my means. It is, in short, one of the treasures I lay up in my earthly heaven. As for you, you never give. Even the weary wayfarer you turn empty-handed and athirst from your domain; and, as to the boys of the neighborhood, you not only refuse them, but you drive them off with blows.—Now what is the result?—I have not given with an eye to any particular gain to myself, while you have, for the purpose of gain, refused to give.—The result is a fact—the same here as it must be elsewhere—as it has been in times past, and as it will probably be in times to come. You have lost, while I have gained. The trees you have lost by girdling in a single night is a greater outset to you than to me could be all the fruit I should give away in a lifetime. In another light, Mr. Gipp, we who have property exposed, like unto orchards and melon patches, are much like a man living in a glass house. Rudeness to passers-by is hardly safe; and especially is it unsafe to excite the animosity of boys."

Mr. Gipp anathematized the boys in a most abrupt and profane manner.

"Ah, neighbor Gipp," said Uncle Samuel, shaking his head, "the boys feel that you thus curse them, and a corresponding spirit is stirred within them in response. You can win their esteem if you will, and when once that is done your trials will have an end."

Nathan Gipp would not be convinced. He went away angry.

Sabbath came, and it had been announced that the presiding elder of the district would preach. His fame as a great-hearted, good, and true man had preceded him, and the village church was filled with an eager, expectant multitude. Uncle Sam. Colby and Nathan Gipp were present, and sat near together. By and by the Elder arose in the pulpit, and glanced over the audience—a plainly dressed, modest man, with calm, benignant face. Uncle Samuel recognized him, and he turned to see if Mr. Gipp's eyes had served him as well. Aye, Gipp knew the man—knew him for the toil-worn wayfarer whom he had so rudely repulsed from his orchard wall.

The minister announced his text,—"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The lesson was a healthful one for Nathan Gipp; and from that time he mended. He never could be a genial, lovable man, like Uncle Sam. Colby; but he became a better and a more charitable and humane man than he had been; and he found that kindness to the boys was of more avail than bull-dogs and goad-sticks.

The thought occurs to me, in closing, that possibly, in the years to come, when Jerry and Tom and Joe Dobbs, and Jim and Zeke Hardy, have grown to be aged men, they may wonder how it is that the boys of to-day are so much worse than were the boys of their boyhood's time. They would only be making the mistake which is being made continually concerning the social and moral condition of the age in which we live.

THE SISTER'S PLEA.

BY MRS. M. A. KIDDER.

Forgive dear brother Andy,
He is not so much to blame
As the ones that led him on, father—
Be it to their shame!
Though he 's been to you a trial
For this many and many a day,
Yet I know he 's sound at heart, father,
Think whate'er you may.

Don't be too hard on Andy,
For you know, though he *is* wild,
That in point of years, dear father,
He is nothing but a child;
That when poor mother left him,
To seek her rest above,
She left him to *our* care, father—
Left him to our love.

I talk to brother Andy,
And it pricks him to the heart;
When I speak of our great loss, father,
Oft his tears will start;
And I know the good will conquer,
If we only, you and I,
Can have patience with the lad, father,
Seeking aid on high.

Then don't be hard on Andy,
Call him not an idle sot;
He 's a brother dear to me, father,
And all the son you 've got.
And if prayers were ever answered
In God's well-perfected plan,
Then our poor misguided boy, father,
Will rise to be a *man!*

* * *

THE

BROADACRES TRAGEDY;

OR,

The Irrevocable Promise.

By CARLOTTA KINGSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE MYSTERY OF NO. 27," "FILIPPO, THE BANDIT," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EBONY CABINET.

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feathered raven! SHAKESPEARE.

The cowardly thrust of Walter Manning's foot, which was designed to plunge the body of his victim beneath the surface of the water, did not have its effect. It was removed somewhat nearer the edge of the stream, but it did not so lose its balance as to topple into the current below.

Yet, though the young Englishman was not dead, he might never have regained his consciousness had not help from an unexpected quarter been near at hand.

Adkins, prowling in the vicinity in pursuit of his favorite national game of fishing, had witnessed the latter part of the struggle between his master and his opponent.

The latter was no stranger to him, for in the moonlight he recognized him as one whom his master hated, and knowing this, he had often inwardly calculated the young man's slender chances of a long life.

But coming suddenly upon the scene of this deadly strife, surprise and horror chained his feet to the ground, so he had not the power to utter a sound, or to move a step forward to separate the combatants.

Yet, when his master proceeded to drag the lifeless body of his vanquished foe to the brink of the stream, the man recovered sufficient command of himself to follow at a distance, that he might observe the *finale* of the sanguinary scene.

The advent of the dog soon put an end to further endeavors on the murderer's part, and as soon as he left the spot, Adkins hastened mechanically to examine the corpse, or what he supposed to be such.

With his heart filled with a dull tumult of horrible thoughts, he knelt beside it, but at the same moment the branches overhead waving aside for an instant, the moonlight fell full upon the young man's face, and Adkins saw that its expression was not like that of a dead man.

He hastily tore open his clothing, and placed his hand upon his heart. He discovered a gentle warmth and pulsation, which filled the soul of the faithful valet with unbounded joy. An impulse which he did not then understand as a providential suggestion, prompted him to divest the young man of his coat and fling it far from him into the stream. Then taking the burden upon his broad shoulders, he bore it gently to Broadacres.

His was the step and the labored breathing that Miss Eristoun heard outside her chamber door, and which for a moment aroused her superstitious fears. The man paused for an instant to take breath, and also to consider whether it was not his duty to arouse Miss Eristoun, and by invoking her aid, avert from her hearthstone the crime of murder. Yet the instant reflection that the life of his master would be the penalty of such coöperation, decided him to fulfill his self-appointed task alone, and resuming his way, he bore his charge to Lady Alicia's haunted chamber.

Here he nursed him and tended him night and day, when his duties enabled him to be away from his master's side without exciting suspicion. His charge returned to consciousness, but it was many days before his reason rallied, and he was able to realize the situation in which he found himself.

Then it was that his keeper understood the arduous duty he had taken upon himself, for the slow healing wounds were retarded by the frenzied impatience of the invalid to be abroad and about his dead patron's business.

Yet who can imagine the horrible fears and suspense which raged in the sick man's bosom, as day after day he beheld himself chained to that bed of pain, while below him there was being enacted a drama which it made him heart-sick to contemplate.

His love for Agatha Eristoun burned with an ardor which threatened his life, and he could not think of her being bound to his unprincipled rival without the most poignant anguish.

From the astute Adkins he learned that her marriage had been postponed, and that his would-be murderer had left Broadacres. On Agatha's account his heart bounded with joy when he heard of his departure, but on his own he was exceedingly chagrined, for it seemed to him that the time would never arrive when he should again be able to measure strength with him in a more equal strife.

Twice, in the absence of his faithful guardian, had his impatience opened his wounds, and each time he nearly paid the penalty of his rashness with his life. He pleaded with Adkins to tell Miss Eristoun of his presence under her roof, and to bid her come to him, that she might receive from his lips a message of life or death.

But the cautious servant was too wise to become embroiled in affairs upon which he knew his master had set his heart. He would dare save him from the damning crime of murder, but woe to whoever should step between him and his love.

So the weary days dragged slowly by, and Walter Manning, but just removed from death's door, watched the tardy mending of his strength with ever-increasing impatience.

The visit of Ernestine Tudor to his chamber filled him with new-fledged hopes. He believed her the same young lady whom he met upon the highway the night of his nearly accomplished assassination. She promised to aid him then, and she had given him a second assurance of assistance now; so why should he not reasonably expect that the period of his mental sufferings was drawing to a close?

During the interview with Miss Tudor he had been too greatly absorbed in his own impassioned feelings to closely note the young lady herself, beyond observing the fact, which no one could ignore, that she was extremely beautiful, graceful in form and courteous in speech.

He parted from her with sentiments of the liveliest gratitude, and it is not strange that when he reflected upon that interview his heart should have warmed toward her as toward a true friend.

She had promised to speak in his behalf to Agatha; he trusted her womanly skill and tact would cause her words to have the effect he so ardently desired. Agatha would be saved from the terrible fate toward which her steps were now tending, and he should be saved the eternal misery of seeing her claimed by another.

He knew not that he had confided his heart's dearest interests to one who had no heart of her own, and who acknowledged no moral obligations which interfered with her own selfish designs.

True to her promise, Ernestine Tudor daily sent by Adkins to the invalid's chamber those little delicacies and comforts which a woman's tact dictates, and thus the tedium of his illness was doubly assuaged, for the comforts were grateful to the sense, and their reception assured him he had one friend at least, under the same roof with himself.

With hourly increasing impatience he looked for a second visit from his new acquaintance, but she came not; and had it not been for the daily tokens of her remembrance, the invalid would have feared her first visit was but a creation of his own disordered fancy.

While Walter Manning was thus chafing with impatience to behold her again, yet hourly gaining in strength, Ernestine Tudor was plotting and scheming, passing her days in friendly intercourse with the one she had resolved to supplant, both in the heart of her lover and in the home of her ancestors.

She purposely refrained from again visiting the haunted chamber for the present, for before she did so she wished to arrange her own false-hearted plans, that she might make a bold, decided step toward the attainment of her ambitious projects.

"Agatha," she suddenly asked, one day, when she and her friend were confidentially discoursing upon matters of equal interest to both, "what are the conditions attached to your acceptance of your cousin's hand?"

Her friend looked at her with some surprise.

"I mean," the other continued, "whether or no there would be any penalty attached to a violation of your promise."

"That alternative is so far from my thoughts that I have never given the consequences a moment's thought," Agatha replied. "And yet I suppose I could easily discover, for without doubt everything connected with the matter is fully explained in the papers papa left in his cabinet."

"Is it possible you have never examined them?" exclaimed Ernestine, whose curiosity stood shocked before this, to her, sublime instance of her friend's indifference.

"No, assuredly I have not, for I have had no occasion to do so. If I fulfill my pledge to my cousin, the alternative of such a course cannot interest me."

"Yet why do you not discover the contents of those papers? I should do so, if it were only to gratify my curiosity."

"Even so, *mon amie*, and I fancy it is your curiosity which is at the bottom of all this argument," said Agatha, putting her arm about her friend's waist, and looking laughingly into her eyes. "Would it entertain you at all if I should propose a pilgrimage to the shrine where the coveted secret is hidden, and question the oracle which so deeply interests you?"

"Yes, yes; pray do!" cried Ernestine, clapping her hands in well-feigned infantile delight. "There is nothing I do so much delight in as mysteries! Since you have discouraged me from visiting the haunted chamber, my fears and fancies are starving for fresh food, and I am greatly interested to know what would happen if you turned rebel, and refused this dark-browed cousin whom you have sworn to marry. Were I in your place, I should be tempted to try it, just to see what would happen."

"Fortunately I am not such a rash, hot-headed creature as you, so I shall do nothing of the sort. I believe that misfortunes come quickly enough, and naturally enough, without our running blindly in search of them."

"Ah, there is more of your wisdom, Mademoiselle Minerva! I don't deny but that you are right, but I do relish a little wickedness now and then, and the romance of braving the consequences of not marrying according to another person's choice would be a delicious experience, I fancy."

"Then why don't you try it in your own case?" asked Agatha, looking mischievously into her friend's face.

Ernestine's countenance clouded, and her manner changed in an instant.

"Ah, it is very different with me from what it is with you. I am too soft and weak a creature to be thrown upon the world without any help or stay. I have no broad ancestral acres from which to draw my maintenance, no roof to cover my head; and were I to cast aside my obligations, I should deprive myself of my very bread. Oh, Agatha!" she exclaimed, with a sudden burst of romantic sentiment, "I hope you may never know the trials which in the past have assailed me, and which even now at times make my life an almost unendurable sorrow."

She bowed her head upon her friend's shoulder, and Agatha, with speechless tenderness, strove to soothe her agitation.

"Forgive me, dear Tina," she said, "for being so unkind as to make that cruel speech. And do not let your future appear so dark to you. If he whom you are to marry commands your esteem, you are certainly not without hope that your after-life may be happy and contented."

But the weeping girl shook her head sadly, and after a few moments more of apparent grief-stricken silence, she arose to her feet, saying:

"Pardon me, Agatha, if my own misfortunes have saddened you also. You know that I but seldom refer to this subject, and you are the only one who is acquainted with all the details of my heart's history. I sometimes wish I had no heart!" she added gloomily, "for then perhaps I might be happy despite all."

"You must not say so," cried Agatha, springing to her feet also, and throwing her arms about her friend in an enthusiastic embrace. "You are sad and dispirited to-day, and we have chosen an unfortunate topic. Come, let us go to the ebony cabinet and search for mysteries. Will not that cheer you?"

Ernestine smiled through her tears, and with the *naive* pleasure of a child she thrust her hand through Agatha's arm and drew her toward the door.

She had gained her point, and now all she had to do was to be certain that the enterprise upon which her art had launched her should be skilfully conducted.

Agatha's countenance assumed an expression of deep sadness as she fitted the silver key in her father's well-known cabinet. She would have much preferred making this first visit to his chamber alone, but her kindness prompted her to sacrifice her own feelings to gratify the curiosity of her friend.

The great number of filed and docketed papers appalled the eye of the impatient Ernestine.

"Surely," she cried, "we have not to examine all these before we arrive at what we are seeking!"

"Not if poor papa was as systematic to the last as I remember him in my childhood. Then every thing was labelled, and it was but a few moments' work to find whatever we desired."

But soon she began to fear that her father's painstaking habits had been encroached upon by disease, for though she looked thoroughly throughout the various compartments, she could find no traces of what she sought.

"Can it be possible that he was mistaken?" mused Agatha. "Did his anxiety to leave nothing undone so work upon his fancy that he persuaded himself every thing was as it should be?"

"I've often heard and read of secret drawers and concealed springs in such cabinets as this," said Ernestine, looking with a keen, searching eye upon the one before her.

"And I am right glad you spoke of it," cried Agatha. "How stupid in me to forget that there is a secret compartment in this one. When I was quite a little girl, father called me to his side, as he sat here writing, and showed me how a little door would spring back when he pressed his thumb upon a certain spot. I remember, too, that he took magnificent jewels from their hiding-place within it, and showed them to me. A diamond necklace I particularly recollect, it was so brilliant and so handsomely set. But I have quite forgotten the trick of opening or finding the place, the open sesame has escaped me."

The two girls now bent to their task with reawakened interest.

"Do you think your father would have placed the papers in the same spot with the jewels?"

"I have no doubt of it, for I believe the papers to which he referred when dying, were of greater importance than anything else he possessed; and for that reason, Tina, dear, when I do at length discover them, you must not be offended if I should first peruse them myself, before I reveal their contents to any one else."

Agatha spoke considerately, yet the words jarred upon Ernestine's ear. She had fully resolved upon learning what the papers contained; she did not doubt but what it was essential that Agatha should first read them alone, and possibly they would be of such a nature that Marmaduke Eristoun's daughter could not with honor divulge their secrets; yet for all that Ernestine Tudor still resolved she would learn their import, so she continued to aid in her friend's search with unabated interest.

"I am certain the hiding-place is in this corner," said Agatha. "Papa used his *right* hand when he touched the spring, which he could not have done had it been situated where you are looking."

Immediately the four white jewelled hands were busy working in the spot indicated. They pressed the hard wood in numberless places where there was a likelihood of a spring being hidden, but so unsuccessful was their search that they at length paused to hold another consultation.

Agatha leaned forward to rest her elbow upon the desk, but her rounded arm had no sooner touched it, than the same "little door" she had seen when a child flew back, and revealed to her gaze the jewels her father's hand had then thrust therein.

But they were all.

Though Ernestine's eyes flashed with delight, and she ardently longed to possess the magnificent gems she saw spread out before her, a bitter disappointment was hers when she found herself baulked of the object of her visit.

"This is very strange," said Agatha; "I certainly expected to find those papers here. If not in this desk they do not exist, and we have seen that they are not here."

Ernestine mused a moment in silence, then she quietly asked:

"Did your father tell any one besides yourself of their existence?"

"I don't know whether Andrews, his servant, was in the room when he mentioned them or not. But even if he had been, he would never have molested them; he has been too faithful a servant to be at all curious about such affairs."

Ernestine's color did not change at this unintentional rebuke. She was too busy thinking of another matter.

"It is probable that years have passed," she said carelessly, "since this hiding-place has been opened before."

"I suppose so," replied Agatha abstractedly.

Ernestine bent her head and examined the receptacle more closely.

Faultlessly made as was the desk, it still could not be so hermetically closed but that the dust of years would sift into its innermost compartments.

Ernestine had an object in making that minute survey, and she was rewarded by discovering that theirs was evidently not the first visit the cabinet had received since its departed owner was supposed to have deposited the papers within it.

She saw the marks of fingers plainly traced in the dust at the bottom of the hiding-place, and she knew it had been caused by the rifling hand of an intruder. No fresh dust had fallen upon these marks, therefore the visit was a recent one.

She did not call Agatha's attention to her discovery, but pretending to be examining the jewels before her, she made a minute observation of the finger marks.

They were broad, and were caused by a man's, not a woman's hand.

"These are certainly very beautiful jewels," Ernestine said, laying her hand upon the diamond necklace, and yet keeping her eye fixed upon the secret compartment. "Did your cousin know that you possessed such a magnificent *parure?*"

"I really cannot tell," Agatha replied. "I wish that he were here to-night, for it really cannot be that I was mistaken in supposing papa spoke of those papers."

"But what can your cousin know of the matter? Did he hear your father mention them?"

"Yes, I am quite sure he did; but if they are not here, why, then I fear poor papa was himself led astray by his feverish fancies."

She sighed deeply as she spoke, and more than one tear rolled from her full eyes.

But Ernestine was too sharp-eyed and keen-witted not to trace between the absent Manning and the missing papers a connecting link, and she looked with inward contempt upon her friend that she should be so blind to the craft of her promised husband.

"But I suppose she still has the most implicit faith in him," she said to herself. "I must not judge her too harshly, for she has not seen what I lately saw in Lady Alicia's chamber."

Her mind being now more fully at rest upon the chief object of her visit, she turned her attention to what would most certainly have claimed her notice under any other circumstances.

Ernestine Tudor loved the glitter and the glare of jewels with all the enthusiasm of an Eastern Sultana. Their evanescent light was in her eyes a lovelier sight than any object in nature or art, and her passionate desire to possess the gems upon which her eyes had sometimes feasted was frequently a positive pain.

Her despair of ever obtaining anything of the kind only increased her fondness for them, and she could never repress feelings of envy and covetousness when she beheld them flashing upon the neck and arms of her more wealthy companions.

She raised an elegant bracelet from the rich mass before her, and thoughtfully laid it across her white, beautifully rounded arm.

"It is very becoming, *ma chère*," said Agatha, and reaching out her hand, she clasped it about her friend's wrist. "You must keep the bracelet as a *souvenir* of Broadacres, and of this fruitless search."

"No, no," replied Ernestine, striving to remove the jewels, yet looking upon them the while with loving eyes. "You surely cannot intend to give me this lovely thing. It is doubtless an heir-loom, to be transmitted to your children and grandchildren."

"Never mind about that, Tina. You certainly see there is enough left to furnish a numerous race of descendants with a *souvenir* of their grandmother Agatha, so you shall keep this bauble, for I know your fondness for diamonds, and have always intended giving you something from this collection."

Ernestine thanked her friend, with sincere gratitude beaming in her eyes, yet a falsehood immediately sprang to her lips, as she added:

"I am thus consoled for my disappointment in not finding the papers we were looking for, but you are doubtless still troubled by finding them missing."

"You forget that it was not *my* curiosity which brought me hither," replied Agatha good-humoredly. "I have no interest in the papers beyond gaining from them the assurance that I am certainly fulfilling my father's wishes, and of that I am already well convinced. Come, let us return to the library. I must hear you sing a song or two before dinner. I haven't heard you since we were at the convent together."

She replaced the remaining jewels in their dark covert, and again locking the cabinet, she put the key in her pocket, and the two descended to the library.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SLIME OF THE SERPENT.

I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glossy courtesy,
Baited with reason not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. MILTON.

The weather was warm, and the wide, deep windows were thrown open, that the fresh air might have free circulation throughout the room.

Ernestine's voice, powerful, cultivated and artistic, was one which might well please the light fancy of the fastidious *habitués* of society; but the full, rich, deep tones of Agatha Eristoun's penetrated the heart, and stirred the lowest depths of feeling.

The solitary invalid in his lofty chamber heard the two voices, and with a wildly beating heart he raised his head from the pillow that not a note might be lost.

While Ernestine sang, he was conscious of a restless longing, a yearning for a deeper expression which her song did not satisfy, but when, a few moments after, the fuller, richer tones of Agatha were wafted to his ear, they fell upon his troubled heart like heavenly balm, and he could scarcely restrain a wild shout of ecstasy.

By a strange chance the song was one which they had often sung together in the past; it was one which ever recalled the image of Agatha Eristoun most forcibly to his mind, and so like sacrilege did it seem to hear it from other lips than hers, that upon more than one occasion he had clasped his hands upon his ears, and fled from concert hall or drawing-room, when others commenced its rendition.

He strained his ear attentively until the last note died away, and then fell back upon his pillow pale and exhausted with the violence of his emotions.

"Has she ever sung that song to the man who is so grossly deceiving her?" he cried aloud. "Oh that she knew what a proof it would be of the identity of her lover! Agatha, Agatha, your heart cannot surely have been so wholly mine, if you can now accept without question this false substitute! Heaven knows I am far from worthy of your love, yet my heart, my conscience and my life, tell me that I am infinitely the superior of the one who now stands in my place, and I long to rescue you from his clutches, even though I am forced to abandon all claims upon your hand myself. Why does Miss Tudor so long delay? Does she not know that I long for her coming as ardently as though I were a spirit in bondage, and she the angel who only could break my chains? 'Tis unkind, nay, cruel, knowing my agony, to keep me in this suspense."

"I have done it for your own chief good," replied a low, gentle voice at the head of his bed, and looking up, he beheld Ernestine Tudor standing near.

She had quitted the library while Agatha was singing, and unobserved by any one, had crept to the haunted chamber.

"I entered so noiselessly you did not hear me," she said, taking the rapturously extended hand of the young man. "But why were you apostrophizing me in such impatient tones?"

"Because I feared you had forgotten your promise; yet, pardon me, I should not speak thus when I have every day received tokens of your kind thoughtfulness."

"Do not think that I blame you for the words I accidentally overheard. I know too well what must have been your impatience, but I dreaded coming to you with nothing but ill news."

"Ill news! You surely cannot mean that Agatha disregards my warning—that she still clings to that phantom of honesty, that libel upon virtue, who is so shamelessly deceiving her!"

"Alas! hers is a heart I cannot presume to fathom. With all the persuasion I could command I bade her search deep into her heart, and question it whether there was not some desire unfulfilled, some doubt of her present happiness, and a fear for the future. I dared say no more, for had I done so it would have involved a declaration of your presence."

"And what said she? Did she not gladly accept your words as corroboration of what her own heart undoubtedly whispered?"

"I grieve to tell you that she did not. She indignantly bade me beware how I thus assailed her faith in one whom her father had not only chosen for her, but acknowledged upon his death-bed in her very presence. She averred that she should defend her allegiance to him as zealously as though he were already her husband."

"Can it be possible that Agatha Eristoun believes me to have fallen so low as to be personated by this man?"

"Have I said that such was her impression?" said Ernestine slowly. "She speaks not of the lover of her childhood. The present only occupies her thoughts, and the present object of her regard seems to have swallowed up all other confidences and remembrances."

"But she surely must know this man Manning sufficiently to be well aware that *I* could not so greatly change."

"What her affianced husband is, that she accepts. You do not understand me. Do you love Agatha Eristoun?"

"Aye. As there is a divinity above us, I do."

"Then do you ever question her character, her excellences; do you criticise her, in short?"

A cry of agony burst from the invalid, as starting forward, he exclaimed:

"Do you mean to tell me that Agatha Eristoun loves this usurper?"

"I do."

"Loves him believing it is myself?"

"She loves him for his *own sake*, ardently, deeply, unalterably, with all the fervor of a woman's first passion, and with all the constancy of her nature."

A groan, which in its depth of utter misery and woe was fearful to hear, fell upon the ear of the false-tongued Ernestine.

She sprang to the table, and seizing a restorative, flew to the side of the now pale, prostrate young man.

"Oh, I fear I have been too cruel, too frank," she cried, as with real alarm she beheld the effect of her words.

She passed her arm under the invalid's head and pressed the vial to his lips. But he opened his eyes, and perceiving her object, turned away and waved her aside.

"Drink," she said. "It will revive you. I surely would not have spoken as I have done had I anticipated this result."

He turned his head toward her, and a firm, steady light glowed in his fine eyes as he said:

"You have done me a real kindness, Miss Tudor. Regret not a syllable you have uttered. The blasting of hopes cherished for years has for a few seconds unmanned me, but the blow has brought a strange strength with its sting. I know not now from whence I draw this strength, for life, in truth, seems a vast blank; yet I feel within me that this is not the time to yield to weakness and despair. I long more ardently than ever for life, and life shall not escape me!" he passionately added. "Agatha, I have loved you deeply, and deep as that love has been will it ever continue; and yet—"

He did not complete the thought which partially forced itself from his lips, but once more closing his eyes, he lay for some moments quite calm and still.

Then again starting up, he exclaimed:

"Have you warned her that her future husband is a deceiver, an impostor—a possible murderer?"

"Everything you would yourself have said I said. I feared to utter in her presence and apply to her lover the dread term of 'murderer,' but I went as far as I dared, and she comprehended my meaning—comprehended it but too quickly for my peace, for with flashing eyes she bade me recall my harsh, unjust and libellous words, or I should be an outcast from Broadacres. And I—craven that I was—dependent as I am upon her bounty for the very food which is my daily sustenance, acknowledged my error, and that I might be near to assist and comfort you, I—yes, I asked her forgiveness—asked forgiveness for speaking the truth, when by the utterance of that truth I hoped to save you both."

She fell upon her knees at the foot of the bed, and buried her face in her hands.

The young man uncovered his own eyes, and looked at her for some moments without speaking.

"What mean you?" he at length said. "It surely cannot be that Agatha Eristoun would be so unjust, so inhuman, and that for me, for my sake, you have braved the lot of an outcast."

No reply came to his ears from the kneeling figure beside him.

"Miss Tudor," he again said—"Miss Tudor, I knew not that my presence here would be the cause of such discord. I was brought hither in an unconscious state, and I have remained solely against my will. But no longer will I abide under a roof which is controlled by so heartless a mistress, so unkind a friend. Adkins will return within the present hour. I shall acquaint him with my resolve, and before to-morrow's sun rises I shall be far hence."

"No, no; you must not. You must not leave Broadacres!" cried Ernestine, looking up with tear-stained countenance. "I implore you, do not attempt so rash a thing! Heed my words, and remain where you are for a few days longer at least."

"I cannot. After what I have this morning heard, a longer stay here would be intolerable."

"But you have not yet heard all. I will make other efforts. I will leave no stone unturned in my endeavors to save Agatha, and I may at the last succeed."

"It is impossible, Miss Tudor. I must leave Broadacres instantly."

"Have I not braved enough in your behalf, sir, to expect that you will heed my words—my wishes now?"

She spoke reproachfully, and her words were not without their effect.

"You have indeed," he quickly replied. "You have braved too much for me already, and it is on your account mainly that I would withdraw myself from this spot."

"Be guided by me, Mr. Manning. To leave Broadacres now would be to complicate many matters which you cannot now fully understand. You are still too weak to travel, and, pardon me, you are also too weak to judge correctly for yourself; so until you become a little stronger, I beg that you will confide in and trust me. I will keep you faithfully informed of whatever transpires below, and let us hope that in the end all will be well."

"But I cannot accept such kindness from you, Miss Tudor."

"For what reason, pray? Do I not owe you a debt which a life-long service could ill requite?"

"I know not that you do. I do not understand you."

"Then I will explain myself," replied Ernestine, while a seeming flush of ingenuous enthusiasm overspread her fair face. "I have not forgotten, as I see you have done, that the courtesy you extended to me upon the night of your attempted murder led you into that danger. Had you gone directly to Eristoun, as you intended, the usurping Manning would not have attacked you, and the evil which now afflicts both your mind and body would not have occurred. So why should I not exert all my powers, all my influence in your behalf? My chief regret is that I had not sooner known of your presence here, that my good offices might the sooner have commenced. Doubtless I speak with too much warmth. The cool English blood which flows in your veins may not acknowledge the deep debt of gratitude which oppresses my Southern heart, yet I should be false to the holiest principle of my nature if I were to abandon you to loneliness, sorrow, and perhaps death, after all the suffering I have unconsciously caused you."

She had risen while speaking, and stood before her hearer the image of grateful, impassioned feeling. Her beauty had never appeared so striking before, neither had the *pose* of her lithe, graceful figure been so perfect.

Walter Manning, whose soul was at all times loyal to the beautiful, gazed admiringly upon the speaker, and a sentiment of pleasure pierced the gloom of his heart when he reflected that the impassioned utterances he had just heard were in his honor.

Yet he could not accept them without a modest disclaimer, and he strove to convince his fair companion that he had done but an ordinary act of kindness; but with charming persistence and a fresh accession of gratitude she clung to her first assertion, and reiterated her desire that now, in his extremity, she should be granted the privilege of repairing, as much as lay in her power, the injury he had sustained.

"Be it as you wish," he said at length. "I will remain here for a while longer; but do not, I pray you, exact of me a longer stay than is necessary, for this place has become hateful to me. Has Miss Eristoun's—I cannot name him thus—has *Adkin's master* returned to Broadacres yet?"

"No, nor will he be likely to do so for some time to come."

"Heaven grant that when he does I shall be near at hand, with sufficient strength to cope with him."

"Would you thus wantonly afflict Miss Eristoun?" asked Ernestine, with a basilisk twinkle in her eyes.

The young man turned impatiently away, and a stifled sigh of pain escaped him. He lay so quiet that Ernestine believed his excitement had overpowered him, and from sheer exhaustion he had fallen asleep. So, noiselessly quitting the bedside, she stole from the room.

"Thus is my first move triumphantly accomplished," she exultantly exclaimed, when she regained her own room. "Thanks to my earnestness, my beauty and his love-blinded eyes, the poor dupe up stairs believes implicitly everything I have told him. He thinks Agatha is really in love with his rival, and that impression I shall take every care to strengthen; but I must manage in some way to see this other Walter Manning, or my own plots will not be materially hastened. I think I shall like the man whom every one else seems to hate so heartily. His is a spirit kindred to my own, I fancy, or would be, were I a man instead of a woman, who is thus obliged to work by art and stealth, instead of with such open-handed weapons as he employs at times."

Her eye fell upon the diamond bracelet which still encircled her arm, and her face lighted with pleasure as she beheld it.

"It was certainly kind in Agatha to give me this," she said, "and yet I could not help thinking, when I saw the rich mass from which she drew it, that perhaps some day the whole would be mine. That magnificent necklace would flash right royally on my neck, and it would be more becoming to my brunette style than to Agatha's light hair and blue eyes. She may keep the pearls and welcome, but if ever I become mistress of Broadacres diamonds shall be the only jewels I will ever wear."

She held the brilliant circlet for a moment among her dark locks, and turning her perfect head to one side, she stood for a few moments admiring the rich flash of the gems from out her dark braids.

"I am not reckoning without my host," she said, as she placed the costly bauble in her jewel case. "The time is surely coming when my magnificent dreams will be realized; I feel they are coming true, and my premonitions never play me false."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

* * *

—There is no less grandeur in supporting great evils than in performing great deeds.

THE DRAGON.

BY ETHEL LYNN.

"Come and meet me, Rosa, darling,
At the cross-road by the mill.
Come to-night. I know the dragon
Is off duty, being ill."

Little Rosa read it over
Slowly, slowly—every word.
What the tender words she whispered,
Only I and twilight heard.

Homeward to the little cottage,
But to steal away again,
Swiftly passing by "the dragon,"
With a dull, unquiet pain.

While her heart beat faster measure,
And her feet slipped swiftly by,
Down the pathway Rosa hastened,
Guarded by no watchful eye.

Ah! her careless clasp unclosing,
As she flitted by the door,
Left the billet lying open,
Where it fluttered on the floor.

Then the wind, intent on mischief,
Bore it to "the dragon's" feet,
There to tell its weary story,
How poor Love and Guile should meet.

Would you see the dragon? Yonder,
Sitting in the fading sun,
Slender, white, a little woman;
Hair like silver deftly spun;

Blue-veined hands together lifted
On her bosom. Thus she prays
God may guide the wilful darling
Into wiser, better ways.

Holding steadfast trust unbroken,
For her dear dead sister's sake,
Battling bravely with a traitor,
Though her own poor heart shall break.

From the gulf that yawns before her,
Tenderly her hands have stayed,
Spite of tears and angry wailing,
The footsteps of the little maid.

Now the faithful watch is over;
Now her languid feet are still;
Now her busy hands are idle,
As Rosa hastens by the mill.

Then, while tears afresh are streaming,
Sounds one agonizing tone:
"Save her, Lord! oh, save my darling;
Keep her as Thou canst Thine own!"

* * * *

At the tryst—black-hearted lover,
Why grows colder Rosa's heart?
Why, with sudden, strange discernment,
Doth she know thee as thou art?

Ah! that burning arrow touched thee,
Winged by that love-lighted prayer!
So a dying saint's petition
Needless makes a dragon's care.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

"Come in," said the Rector.

It was the old woman who laundressed the old clergyman's linen who had knocked. And now she entered with her basket on her arm, a brown-faced woman, with black hair streaked with white, and a blue woolen shawl passed over her shoulders and knotted at her waist behind, over a brown calico dress. A working woman to the backbone, but not quite an ignorant looking woman.

"The kitchen folks seem to be away," she said. "I knocked three times at that door, and I was afraid to leave the basket of clothes alone for fear the cat might get into it. No place a cat likes to sleep like clean clothes."

"It's just as well here, Mrs. Kerner," said the clergyman. "Sit down and rest."

She sat down, making no ado about it. Solid and trim and quiet, she looked like some figure that had walked out of an old Dutch picture. Her eyes quietly gazed about the room, taking in the handsome carpet with its arabesque pattern, the mantel mirror and the big walnut bookcase; the study table with its student's lamp, and silver ink-stand with its presentation verses engraved on its side; last, but not least of all, the clergyman in his great arm-chair, benevolent, gracious, venerable.

"We are having fine weather, Mrs. Kerner."

"We are, sir, very fine."

"It will be a bright Thanksgiving day to-morrow."

"Yes, sir, I'm thinking so. The Indian summer, so they tell me. Though it's hard to fix Indian summer for certain."

"When the dahlias are gone and the artemisias come, and after there has been a frost. These are good rules, Mrs. Kerner," said the old gentleman.

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Kerner; but it was easy to see that the Indian summer had no interest for her—no pleasant interest, at least.

She arose, and with a "Good-day, sir," turned toward the door, intending to depart. The clergyman stopped her with another remark:

"We don't see you often at church, Mrs. Kerner."

"No, sir."

"You'd find it a great comfort to come oftener."

"Yes, sir."

"There's the Thanksgiving service to-morrow. Come to that. It does us all good to give thanks once a year."

"If we can," said she, in an under tone; "but there's them that have no thanks in their hearts. It would be lip service to give them, I'm thinking. I'm not a book-learnt woman, but I get at that some way. If they weren't thankful, the service wouldn't make them so."

"But *you* are thankful, Mrs. Kerner?"

She shut her mouth tight and hard.

"Are you very poor?"

"I've as much as I need; more if I like to work for it. My husband was only a bit of a shoemaker, but he left me the little house, and with my tenants and a little washing I do well."

"Perhaps your health is bad?"

"There is no stouter woman in all the city, sir."

"Enough and to spare, and health. Surely you might give thanks for those."

The woman turned about again and reseated herself. She spread her palms on her knees, and looked him in the face.

"He knows," she said. "He don't hear the words we speak, and not mind the thoughts. I'm not thankful, and if I'd say it I'd lie. I'm angry and sorrowful and rebellious all the days I live, and most of all when Thanksgiving day comes around. All through the Indian summer there's something in the air, warm and misty-like and sweet though it is, that seems like a curse to me. God is against me, sir, and I know it."

The old man looked at her quietly and said:

"Perhaps you have lost those who were dear to you?"

"I have."

"God is no more cruel to you than to others. We all die; we all lose loved ones by death."

"It isn't that which troubles me," said the woman. "I sit by my old man's grave sometimes and feel quite happy. When I die, I'll go to him perhaps. But Jude! I'll never see Jude again, here or in heaven. Jude! Jude!"

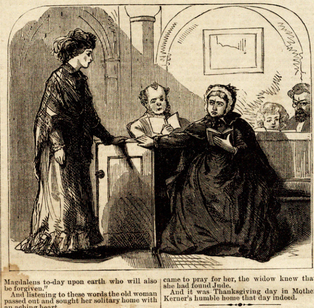
She bent her head low and rocked to and fro, but she did not weep. The clergyman sat quite still. She broke the silence next herself.

"I might as well tell you all, sir—I've told so much. My old man and me we had one girl. I named her out of the Bible, Judith—Jude we called her for short. She was a pretty baby, and a pretty child, and a pretty girl. A bright, sweet face she had, and such sweet eyes, and a little waist like a lady. I was too proud of her, I know, but she was all I had. I dressed her too fine, perhaps, but I couldn't help it. I didn't know a fault she had, and I thought she loved her mother; but there are feelings that blot good, holy love, and they came to my girl somehow.

"One Thanksgiving day, ten years ago to-morrow, sir, I had cooked a good dinner, and went to call my girl to it. She wasn't to be found. I thought that some harm had happened her; I never thought she would leave home of her own will, and I searched the country through for her; but news came at last that I couldn't doubt. I tried, but I couldn't. She had married and gone off with a rich, idle young fellow in the place, and she'd been planning for it for a month—all that bright Indian summer. Do you wonder I hate it? She was just sixteen, and like a little child to me. Her scum of a husband left her in a few months. I had it put in the papers that if she'd come back I'd forgive her; but she never came. And when Thanksgiving day comes about, I light no fire in my house and I eat no meals. I fast the day through, and there's never a thankful thought in my heart. You've got the truth now. I never thought to tell any one, but I have. I was as good a church woman as any once. What's the use now? God has cursed me."

She arose again. The clergyman arose also. He stopped before her.

"Jesus was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," he said, "and whom God loveth He chasteneth. Come to us to-morrow, and we will both pray for Jude. Man may not know it, but God will. There was forgiveness for Mary Magdalen, and there are Magdalens to-day upon earth who will also be forgiven."



And listening to these words the old woman passed out and sought her solitary home with an aching heart.

The talk had brought back all her trouble, and never had a sadder Thanksgiving day dawned upon her than that that came with the next sunrise. According to her custom she put on her black dress, and sat fireless and foodless in her tidy room; but when the bells began to ring, and she heard the church-going feet pass her door, these words came into her head, of all that the old minister had uttered:

"We will pray for Jude."

The bells seemed to say it as they rang: We will pray for Jude, we will pray for Jude, over and over again. The feet pattered it; the clock ticking on her mantel ticked it forth. Pray for Jude. And would that indeed help her poor lost daughter? She believed in prayer. She used to pray. Yes, she said to herself, she would go to church; she would go and pray for Jude.

She put on her bonnet and shawl; and then she took in her hand her worn old prayer book.

She walked out of her house with a slow, almost reluctant step, but the bells seemed to call her still, and she could not go back. "Come, pray for Jude," they said, "come, pray for Jude," like so many silvery angel voices.

There were many more well-dressed people in the street, but old Dame Kerner was tidy enough to pass, and no one would have seen her trouble in her face, that large-featured, solid old English face, so different from most of those in the throng of Americans churchward bound.

She passed into the church quietly, but she did not make her way to the front among the silks and velvets. With an old country notion of keeping her place, that had more pride than humility in it, she took the back pew, and opened her book and followed the service.

At first her heart was hard and cold, and no real prayer came to it; but presently a lady passed up the aisle, holding a little girl by the hand, a little girl with flossy golden curls, like those that grow on Jude's baby head. Tears came to the old woman's eyes; she bent down her head; they trickled over her hands; but they were blessed tears—they softened her. In a moment more she was praying for Jude—praying as she had not prayed for years.

The service was half over, and she sat with a great comfort on her soul, when there crept silently into the door a woman—a young woman still, but, ah, how wretched and haggard!

She had made a dismal attempt to tidy herself, but had failed utterly. A mud fringe on her dress; a tattered loop in her shawl; a bonnet crushed out of shape, but crowned with a dusty feather—these told her story well; but her face was grave, and she came in decently and softly, and looked askance at the pew the old woman sat in.

Once that decent body would have barred the door from such as this, but the thought of Jude was strong on her just then, and she made room with a welcoming motion. The girl slipped in. She knelt down on the foot bench, and hid her face. The old woman looked at her.

"She's got a mother, may be," she said to herself, and in a moment more offered her a share of her book.

The girl took it without looking at her.

"I'm a deal too shabby to come to church," she whispered, in a sort of careless manner. "I'd have put on better if I had it. Thank you."

It was a pretty voice. It had been a pretty face. The old woman felt sorry for her. "The bells called me to pray for Jude," she said. "Perhaps they called her to pray for herself. Belike she needs it." And so they knelt side by side until the service was over, and the organist was playing the people out. Then old Mrs. Kerner arose, but the girl did not stir. She seemed to be praying still, and rather than disturb her the old woman sat down again. The silks and velvets rustled past. The church was empty of all save the clergyman, the clerk, and those two women. Then Mrs. Kerner, looking closer at the figure, saw how its hands were dropped, and touched it in alarm. It fell over into her arms, and she gave a cry that brought the two men to her at once.

"It's a poor woman," said the widow. "She came in when I did, and took a seat with me. I never saw her before. She's in a faint, I think."

They lifted her to the pew cushions, and the clerk brought water. He sprinkled her face with it. The old woman knelt by her and looked at the pale features. The blood was flying to her own face, and her heart beat furiously.

Soon the woman gave signs of returning consciousness and began to move. Her eyes opened. She put her hand to her head.

"Tell me where I am," she said. "Tell me who she was. Did I dream about her? If it had been mother, she'd have cursed me! cursed me! cursed me!"

She burst into tears and hid her face. The clergyman bent over her.

"Why should your mother curse you?" he asked. "Mothers pray for their children. They forgive them everything. Is yours so bad a mother?"

"She was *good, good, good!*" cried the girl. "It was I who was bad. I ran away from her. Pray for me! What would be the use of praying for me? Nobody would be so wild as to pray for Jude, and no mother could forgive me."

She struggled to her feet and wrapped her tattered shawl about her.

"Let me go," she said, almost roughly. "I am not fit to be in a church with such as you. I must have been crazy to come in, I think; and to make a fool of myself fainting. Let me go."

But there were arms about her that held her fast, and a voice in her ear that sobbed, "My girl, my darling, God has given you back to me;" for there in the church to which she came to pray for her, the widow knew that she had found Jude.

And it was Thanksgiving day in Mother Kerner's humble home that day indeed.

SCIENCE.

An interesting fact has just come to light concerning the outflow of the waters of the Black Sea into the Mediterranean. A strong surface current runs from north to south through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. It has been found that this proverbially rapid flow is only superficial. Twenty fathoms down, a current of extraordinary force sets in the opposite direction—that is, toward the Black Sea—with a velocity much greater than that of the outflowing surface water. This discovery was made by the officers of the British government surveying ship *Shearwater*. We are told that a special apparatus was attached to the ship's boats, to test the strength of this under-current, when, to the surprise of all, the boats were in many places driven along against the upper current at a speed greater than that of the steam launch of the *Shearwater*.

The English expedition now being fitted out for the circumnavigation of the globe is to visit the most remote and unknown regions, including the icy coast of the South Pole, Kerguelen's Land, or the Island of Desolation, in the Southern Ocean, and the large and unexplored island of Papua, or New Guinea, which lies north of Australia. The scientific staff, which will be under the direction of Prof. Wyville Thomson, comprises competent foreign, as well as British naturalists. The voyage is expected to occupy about three years and a half. The forward magazine of the *Challenger*, the government steam corvette designated for the use of the party, is completely stowed with spirits and stoppered bottles, for the preservation of natural history specimens.

It seems that beavers are increasing in number in the state of Mississippi. Mr. John Shelton, who resides at Raymond, in Hinds county, writes to one of the editors of *Silliman's Journal* that he has lived there for nearly thirty-five years, and that although it was very difficult to find a beaver or a beaver dam thereabouts in the year 1837, they are now so numerous that there are probably half as many beavers as there are people in the county. The increase was first noticed about the year 1850. It is believed to extend over all the counties of central Mississippi and Alabama.

It is a curious fact that the bite of the cobra di capello, although fatal to any non-venomous snake, is not injurious apparently to one of its own kind, yet Dr. Fayrer, in his recently published account of the venomous serpents of India, vouches for it. He also tells us, what is known to few, that a poisonous snake may bite without allowing its poison to exude. Though the number of young girls who are bitten by venomous snakes in Hindostan is smaller than the number of boys so bitten, the mortality from snake-bite is greater among women than among men.

Probably but few persons are aware that natural deposits of both iron and gold are found in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The gold occurs in very limited quantities, however. The iron ore at Bartlett, and the alluvial gold of Indian stream, are briefly described by Professor C. H. Hitchcock, in his annual report of the State Geological Survey, just published. The *American Journal of Science and Arts* refers to the White Mountain region as including "the dark and most difficult part of American geology."

The order of animals known as the *quadrumana*—four handed, from the Latin *quatuor*, four, and *manus*, a hand—includes monkeys and all similar creatures having four limbs, each of which is used as a hand. The first fossil remains of such animals ever discovered in the United States have just been detected by Professor O. C. Marsh, of Yale College, among the fossil specimens of extinct animals discovered by him in the Rocky Mountain of Wyoming Territory.

Wheat has recently been discovered in an ancient bone cave in Namur, Belgium, which also contained several bone implements and numerous human bones, indicating that it had once been a resort of pre-historic man. In announcing this discovery to the Royal Academy of Sciences at Brussels, Monsieur G. Dewalgue positively asserts that the wheat so found shows distinct evidence of having been grown under cultivation.

Skeletons of wild animals, when packed before they are dry, should be put into pine sawdust, instead of into hay or straw. So says Mr. J. W. Clark, of the Cambridge Museum. A knowledge of this fact is important to sportsmen and others in the habit of forwarding zoological specimens to collectors for preservation.

On the third of September last, seven and one-fifth inches of rain fell at Bombay, Western India, in two hours. The total rainfall during a whole year, at New York, does not average six times as much as this.

Recent explorations in the Bermudas, by Mr. Matthew Jones, have convinced him that the islands occupy the site of what was once a much more extensive island group than that now existing.

An instrument for tracing upon paper the muscular movements of a horse in trotting, pacing or running, was described at a recent meeting of the Paris Academy of Sciences.

A small quantity of common salt has been found in a meteorite which fell, on the twenty-third of July last, in the French department of Loir-et-Cher.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Shakespeare (New York) says: "I would be pleased if you would inform me of the best manner to improve the mind so as to be able, when in an *intelligent* assembly or company, to take part in conversation. I possess an education such as can be acquired by attending our public schools, having graduated from school and attended our 'college' for about three months; and the only leisure time I have is during the evening, as I am engaged in mercantile pursuits; and of the short space of time I have at my control, I employ three evenings in the week in attending evening High School—two for the study of Political Economy, and one evening for debate. Do you consider this course advisable, as I intend to become a merchant? In conclusion, I would beg to be excused for taking up so much of your valuable time, and as this is a matter of *vital* interest to me, I would hope to receive your kind indulgence, and also a prompt reply." You are already far too wordy. We have cut out a page of your letter without diminishing its value. We decline to advise you how to converse. We think you must be quite formidable already in that line. The elements of an agreeable companion are modesty, information, deference to the feelings of others, good sense, and direct, concise speech. As for those talkers who speak articles and books, when they are let loose, the rest of the company begin to pray mentally, "in the words of the poet," "Oh! for a lodge in some vast wilderness!" You appear to be improving "the shining hour," and we have no fear as to your success.

A. F. says: "I take the liberty of troubling, as I have been told that likely you will kindly inform me of what I wish to know. I came from London, England, a short time since, and got a letter from friends there since, begging me to let them know if certain statements made there by some agent, respecting Nebraska, were true; for if so, they would leave England and emigrate to that place. This gentleman states that land is for nearly nothing; that the railroad also gives grants of land; that nothing but prairie grass is to be cleared off; that a man with a few pounds in his pocket, and brains, can soon make an independent fortune there by jobbing, stock rearing, and wood growing. I again assure you that I have in vain sought means of information before troubling you, but being a lady and a stranger, can find no reliable information on the subject." There is abundance of land in Nebraska, to be bought for a few dollars an acre, with nothing on it but good grass. The climate is mild, the soil is good. The railway runs through Nebraska, and it is well adapted for settlers who have a little money, some patience, and a deal of energy and industry.

F. L. writes: "I have an only brother, twenty-two years of age, who becomes intoxicated almost every week, and all means to break up the habit has proved ineffectual. I am told if I get some whiskey, or other liquor, put a live eel in it, but remove it before it dies, then give the liquor to my brother to drink, it will cure him of all taste for it. Please inform me if an eel is poisonous, or if there could be any danger in trying this, as I want to run no risks, yet am so anxious to break up the habit. By giving this your earliest attention, you will confer a lasting favor on me." We have never made either experiments or observations on putting eels into whiskey, or as to the effects resulting therefrom. As to taking the eel out alive, we should think you would have to take him out pretty quickly to get him out of such whiskey as is made now-a-days, alive. We should suppose that an eel, or almost anything else, would rather improve the whiskey. We do not see how anything could well make it worse than it is said to be.

Information Wanted says: "Will you be kind enough to tell me, in your answers to correspondents, if the following statement is an exaggeration? A noted traveller, in his lecture on Siberia, tells us that in returning from Kamtschatka to Moscow, Russia, he took a sleigh ride of seven thousand miles, being the usually travelled route. Some contend it would be an impossibility; the extent of Siberia would not admit of such a lengthy trip. How is it? Also, what is the range of temperature in mid-winter in the northern part of Siberia?" We never contradict a traveller. He buys the privilege of astonishing us by his efforts. We keep the mind in a state of equilibrium in relation to these startling things, and await more evidence. This gentleman may have made a detour, or lost his way. At Yakutskoi in Siberia the mean temperature of the year is plus twelve degrees Fahrenheit; of the winter months minus thirty-six degrees; that of the summer plus fifty-eight; the difference therefore is about ninety-five degrees.

C. I. S. (Philadelphia,) writes: "About two years ago I met with a young girl about one year and a half my senior, and I love her very much, and so does she me. A few weeks ago she became offended with me; I don't know what for. She is now in love with another young man, but I think she loves me yet, and only wants to annoy me. What do you think I should do? Go and ask her to make it all right again and give her my hand, or let it drop?" We do not see but what it is "dropped" enough already, and the main question seems to be, not whether you shall give her your hand, but whether she will give you hers. Probably your never asking her that, may be the secret cause of her taking up with another suitor. However, it may not be too late; and if she does say No, you will not be so dilatory next time.

W. G. (New York) says: "There has of late been a little dispute between a few young gentlemen which we have not been able to settle, and therefore concluded to leave the answer to you; namely, 1st. Can I become President of the United States, providing that I was born in the United States, but my parents were born in Europe? I think that I can, but my opponents say that I cannot, because my parents were not born here. 2d. What is the salary of the President of the United States? By answering this at your earliest convenience, you will oblige a constant reader of your most valuable paper." You are eligible for the Presidency; but, as the salary is only twenty-five thousand dollars, you had better not aim at it till you have secured a competency in some other position.

P. B. (St. Louis, Mo.) says: "A difference of opinion exists among several of my friends as to the correctness or incorrectness, grammatically, of the following sentence: 'Between you and I this matter is perfectly understood.' The parties interested in the controversy have referred the question to you for your decision. Will you do me the favor to state in your next issue, whether the sentence is good or bad grammar?" The pronouns "you" and that following, are put in the objective by the preposition "between." But "I" is nominative, and one's ear would detect the error if we said, "Between you and between I." "Between you and me" is correct.

Earnest says: "Please tell me if there is anything that will make any one grow, as I am seventeen years old, and fully two years behind other boys of that age in size. What is the best way to strengthen one's voice?" There is no particular kind of food which can be recommended to make you grow. Good, wholesome, nourishing food, with habits of cleanliness, and a plenty of exercise in the open air, will serve you best. The way to strengthen one's voice is to develop it under the instruction of a competent teacher.

Minnie says: "Being a constant reader of your valuable paper, and noticing your ready answers to correspondents, I beg leave to submit to you the following question: If a person brings the same pail several times full of water, would it not be proper to say that he or she brought several pailfuls of water? Your answer will be anxiously looked for." Sorry you should be so anxious about this. There is no just objection to your "pailfuls." The idea of the plural is of the contents, rather than of the pail.

P. A. H. says: "If a young gentleman is sitting in the pew of a church where he is a stranger, and a young lady and gentleman should come in after meeting has commenced, should he rise and let them pass in, or sit still, they belonging to the church?" According to common custom, which, however, is often productive of inconvenience, he should rise and allow them to enter. If, however, they possess good sense and tact, they would simply ask him to move up and keep his seat.

School-Girls (Georgetown) say: "Please be so kind as to answer one question for us. We have organized a literary society, and are in the dark as to what name we shall give it. Please give us two or three names and their meanings in your next issue—some word with two letters (capitals)—and greatly oblige." The "Lincoln Literary," or the Belles Lettres Club, or Society, will do; or you can select one of the graces, or of the muses, and take her name for yours.

Gold (New York) says: "I am the possessor of a rare old gold coin—United States ten-dollar piece, dated 1797—which I am compelled to part with. Would you kindly give me the names of any parties who would be likely to purchase it? Also, would you state, in your opinion, what it is worth? It is remarkably well preserved." We do not know a buyer. You had better advertise, as objects of this kind bring a fancy price, of which no one can give an idea beforehand.

S. C. C. says he has a few hours to himself every evening, which he spends alone. He is twenty-two, has had but two years' schooling, and is anxious to improve himself. We advise him to spend his evenings reading. Begin with history and biography. Read also travels. Keep a geography and atlas at hand, and every time you come to the mention of a new place, look it up and remember where it is situated.

J. C. M. (Staten Island) says: "Will you please tell me what is meant by a Yankee? I had a discussion with a friend, and he says any one born in the Eastern States is a Yankee. Please state who is right, and oblige." Here we consider the term Yankee restricted to natives of the six New England States. Further South, New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians are frequently spoken of as Yankees.

Daisy Burton says: "A lady friend and I have had a slight dispute. She says, in speaking to a Senator, one should address him as Senator So-and-so. I contend that Mr. So-and-so would be correct. Will you please tell us which is right." Both ways are proper and common, so you are both right. As a rule, when men have risen to a high place, the title of the same is not an offensive handle to the name.

Scooney says: "Will you please, through your correspondents' column, mention the names and publishers' address of some interesting books suitable for a present to a lady, and oblige a constant reader?" Froude's, Ruskin's, Motley's, Macaulay's or Livingstone's works. Send for a catalogue to any good publishing house, and select. Any bookseller can procure any ordinary book you want.

A Reader (New York) says: "Will you please explain in the next issue of your paper the meaning of the word Sorosis, its derivation, etc.?" "Sorosis" we presume to have been formed from *soror*, Latin for sister, and to have been intended for a sisterhood, though the members were not, we imagine, under vows, and spoke mostly in English.

Seminole says: "It may seem simple and silly to ask you the question, but please inform me what gave rise to the expression, 'Mad as a March hare.'" Hares are uncommonly shy and wild in March, which is their rutting season. Hence the description of the morbid and melancholy.

Maud B. (Ohio) writes: "A young gentleman has been waiting upon me for several months. I once thought I loved him, but commenced disliking him by degrees. When he speaks to me I dislike him, and I can hardly answer him respectfully, but I do, for he is a nice young man, and loves me truly, I think. When I see him coming toward me, I feel more like running than I do like standing still. He asked me to marry him, but I refused him. This young gentleman goes to church regularly, and he neither smokes, chews, nor drinks. What I want you to tell me is, did I do right by refusing him? Some say it is because I like to flirt, and could not settle down. Besides, this young man is so affectionate, and I don't like it; but I would not feel so if I loved him, would I? There is another young man that has been waiting on me for some time, and loves me very dearly, so he says, and I love him, but my folks don't like him; why, I cannot tell, for he never touches intoxicating drinks, and is very industrious—works every day. He asked me to marry him, and I have engaged myself to him for four years, and wear his ring; but my folks know nothing of it. Please tell me if I do right. Sometimes I think I don't know what love is, and am afraid I will get to feeling toward this one as I did toward the other; but I try to be as true to him as he is to me, for I know he is true. He never goes with any one but me; but I go with all of the boys; if I did not, my folks would know I regarded him on more friendly terms than friendship. Sometimes I think I could enjoy his company alone, and then I don't think I could, as I like to go with all of the young gentlemen. Do you think I ought to hold him to his engagement, feeling as I do? or break it, and let him find some one that knows she loves him, for there are plenty of them here. And one more question. I correspond with a young man; do I do right? In his last letter he said he had had the blues; he couldn't tell me why, but that I could guess. I am only seventeen." If you are only seventeen, still you are a consummate flirt. You did right to refuse a man whom you did not love, and you will certainly do any one who offers himself to you a great kindness by refusing him, unless you can acquire more stability of character and more fidelity than you now seem to possess, if we judge from your own statements.

H. S. (Fayetteville, N. C.) says: "I come to you for a little advice. This is the first time I have asked you for advice, although we have been taking the *Ledger* over five years. We took it before the war, but it was stopped by the war in 1861. We all look forward to the day for the *Ledger* to come with much pleasure. I will tell you about what I want advice, and let you decide the best way for me to act. I got acquainted with a young lady several years ago, and kept company with her nearly a year, when I went to a sister city, where I stayed two years. We kept up a regular correspondence during my absence. She always seemed glad to see me, and for six months before I went off, I used to go with her regularly to church, prayer meeting, and choir practice. I very seldom made any engagements for these places, but when I called for her, she was always ready and waiting for me. During a visit I made to my native place, I asked her if she would be mine, and told her that she was the only lady I had ever really loved. She answered that we were too young to think of marriage. I then asked her if she loved me. She said only as her dearest friend. Since that time I have asked her twice to be mine, but each time received the same answer. Do you think, as I am twenty-one, and she some seven or eight months younger, that we are too young to be married? Some ten months ago I quit going to see her, thinking that I could forget her, but I found that I was mistaken. I kept away from her for about eight months, and when I called again, she treated me the same as she did before I stopped going to see her. She says that she likes me best of all her gentlemen acquaintances. Nearly every one says that she is the best and prettiest young lady in the place. Please tell me what to do. I love the lady devotedly, and have loved her since I first saw her." Persevere. As the young lady's only objection seems to be that you and she are too young to marry, time is in your favor, as you are both constantly growing older.

L. B. H. F. & E. (Caruther's Home) say: "We, a party of boarding-school girls, have some questions to ask. 1st. Is it proper for a school-girl to carry on a love correspondence with a young gentleman, if her teacher does not object? 2d. Is it proper for a girl to permit a gentleman friend to hold her hand while conversing? 3d. Should a girl give her photograph to a gentleman, if he insists? 4th. Should a lady allow her betrothed to kiss her before starting on a journey? 5th. Is it wrong for a girl to wear a gentleman's ring to whom she is not engaged? 6th. Is it wrong to write to a gentleman who advertises for correspondents?" 1. There are two other questions the answers to which have to be taken into account. What is the girl's age? Do her parents or guardians approve? If she is of mature years and her friends approve, and the teacher makes no objection, we see none. 2. Much depends on years, relative position and other circumstances. A young gentleman "friend" so doing would be regarded as "spoony," and leaving a female hand in his for some time would argue some female approval of his feeling. 3. Not to an ordinary acquaintance, we think. Ladies who respect themselves do not hand their photographs around "promiscuously." 4. If he is going very far, for a long time, and is otherwise very good, we think Yes, "if he insists." 5. We think it indelicate.

Fatalist says: "At a Fair held in my neighborhood lately, while examining some of the things on exhibition, I noticed a gentleman who seemed to watch me very closely, and on making a remark to a lady friend in regard to some things on exhibition, this gentleman, although I was not acquainted with him, turned and gave me the desired information. Thinking it impertinent in him, I turned and left the spot, but he followed me most all that day, looking very pleasant all the time. I became interested, and returned his smile. He made several attempts to speak or join me, but each time I eluded him. I did not get acquainted, but since I received a letter asking me to correspond, or afford him an opportunity of becoming acquainted. I did not answer it, but will await your kind advice. Was there any impropriety in my conduct? Please answer in your next issue." It is impossible for any one but the parties concerned to measure the amount of encouragement a lady gives to a gentleman, so we cannot categorically reply to your question; but the general rule is safe, for a lady to wait for an introduction from reliable persons before entering into friendly relations with strange gentlemen. You had better inquire, or you may find yourself a "fatalist," like many others, in the sense of having made a fatal mistake.

Leb. L. says: "Is there a law in any of the States prohibiting the marriage of full cousins? if so, please name the States, and give me your candid opinion of cousins marrying. I was engaged to a gentleman, and I thought I loved him till I met my cousin; and I wrote him my state of feeling, and asked him to release me from the engagement. And I feel that I cannot conscientiously marry him, as long as I love my cousin better. I fear I could not be happy with him. I have never, as yet, said anything to my cousin of my former engagement, and I believe he knows nothing of it. I ask you candidly, what shall I do? Please answer soon." We are not aware of any such law, in any State. In many cases such marriages turn out very well. In many cases evil consequences follow to the next generation. You had better be frank with your cousin, before becoming engaged to him. We can give you no further advice, in the rather fragmentary state of our knowledge of all the circumstances.

An Old Reader (New York) says: "Having had a discussion with a friend in which we could not agree, regarding the following subject, I appeal to your better judgment for a reply to the question: Is it customary for parties not connected with the church to remunerate a minister for performing the baptismal service? By giving an answer in your next, you will greatly oblige." In the German churches we understand it is customary to make the baptism of a child the occasion of a pecuniary gift to the pastor. In most other Protestant churches we think there is no such custom. But where it is the custom, the obligation would be stronger on non-members of a congregation than on members, who, it is presumed, contribute to the minister's support. Of course, if there is any extra demand upon the time of a minister, as, for example, in making a journey for the baptism, it would in any case be proper enough to keep him from being out of pocket.

C. J. (Augusta, Ga.) writes: "Is it improper for a young lady to ask a gentleman for his photograph? I have read in your paper that you do not think a young girl should give her picture to any male unless a relative or intended, but I have never seen anything about asking a gentleman for his. I do not mean any relative, only an acquaintance." It is impossible to lay down an absolute rule in such matters, which should always be adhered to. Suppose, for instance, you had an intimate friend—say an old school-mate—who was about starting on an expedition to the North Pole, or in search of Dr. Livingstone, there would be no impropriety in your asking him for his photograph before his departure. At the same time we do not think that it is well for a young woman to be forward in asking all the young men of her acquaintance for their likenesses. It is inconsistent with true feminine delicacy and modesty.

Edna (Ohio) writes: "Do you think it right for a father to break a daughter's engagement, the reason for which, as he gives it, being simply because the gentleman is twenty-four, while the lady is only seventeen? He says there is too much difference in our ages altogether, and he cannot allow an engagement between us. We both love each other dearly, and it is a sad blow for both of us. He is alone in the world, and I might as well be, for no one at home loves me." The reason assigned by your father seems to us insufficient. Perhaps he has some other, which he does not yet disclose; but we trust that excellent conduct on the part of both of you may ultimately overcome all opposition, no matter from what causes it may arise.

Inventor (Charleston, Ill.) asks: "If I take out letters patent for a certain article, say a corn planter, and some one sees my planter and its defects, and goes to work and improves it, and takes out letters patent for his improvement, can he use my patent without my permission? And if I will not authorize him to use my improvement, what can he do, the article being much better with his improvement than without it?" He cannot use your invention without your permission, and you cannot use his improvement without his.

Soldier (Fort Dodge, Kansas) writes: "I purpose entering on the study of law at the expiration of the ten months I yet have to serve as a soldier. As I have considerable leisure time, it has occurred to me that I might profitably employ it by reading law books. Will you please state the books best adapted to beginners, situated as I am, and from whom they can be best ordered from in your city?" Begin with Blackstone's Commentaries and Kent's Commentaries. Order them of any bookseller in New York or St. Louis.

T. D. (Pennsylvania) says: "I wish my property to be secured to my wife in case I die, and also secured to myself in case she dies." If the property is yours in fee simple now, the death of your wife would not impair your title to it; and you had better make a will, leaving it to her in case she survives.

B. J. J. (Ohio) asks: "What will keep the hair from coming out?" Youth.

⁂ *Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*